SHORT STORIES

No. 750.] Week ending May 16th, 1903. [Price One Penny.

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(A Dramatic Incident from the Story, "A TANGLED WEB." See inside.)

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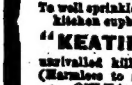

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Short Stories

No. 750.] [One Penny.

For the Week Ending May 16th, 1903.

A Tangled Web.

Containing the Incident Depicted on the Cover.

Telling of How a Photograph Nearly Brought Trouble.

"Good-bye, Cecil, I'm off now."

Fitting on her gloves as she went, little Mrs. Bertram tripped gaily downstairs, and paused at the door of the room where she supposed her husband to be. He was not there, however, so she went across the hall towards his study.

She had only been married six months, and the idea of going out, even only for a few hours, without a good-bye kiss from her husband was simply unthinkable.

The door stood ajar, and peeping in, Nell saw her husband seated before his writing table, looking intently at a photograph, and so absorbed that he did not hear her step as she approached to surprise him with a kiss.

But before the kiss was given Nell started back in burning anger. The photograph which her husband was studying so intently was not hers; it was that of a young and very lovely girl, quite unknown to her.

Now Nell had a temper; those very tiny, sparkling, vivacious girls generally have, and for a six-months' bride to find her husband hanging absorbed over another girl's photograph is enough to rouse the sweetest temper.

The large dark eyes flashed; the fairy hand clenched itself; the sweet little face reddened with anger.

Not trusting herself to speak, she stole softly away, and set out without the coveted good-bye kiss. But as she sat in the carriage with the friend she was taking to the *matinée*, her mind was on the mysterious photograph, and she returned perfectly random replies to Laura Grant's chatter.

When they reached the theatre it was the same thing. She gazed at the stage with unseeing eyes, and the smartest and wittiest speeches passed her unnoticed. She had never before known jealousy.

Married at nineteen to a man sixteen years her senior, who made her his idol, she had never cast a thought to any other woman who must have had a part in the years of his life before Nell entered it. Who *could* this woman be?

"Isn't this a pretty scene?" whispered Laura, and Nell, turning lack-lustre eyes on the stage, murmured assent.

The next instant she uttered a half-suppressed exclamation, and sat staring at a girl, who, representing a wood-elf, had just run on. It was the girl of the photograph, but how much more beautiful in life!

The violet eyes, the waves of rich brown hair, the pure Greek profile, the exquisite figure made up a lovely picture, and Nell gazed at her fascinated. Her heart felt like a stone. Was this the explanation of the photograph? Had her noble husband stooped to a low intrigue with an actress?

The *matinée* over, Laura dropped at her own house, and Nell, once more at home, the weight of her spirits grew heavier. She was so unlike herself that her husband was alarmed, and kept anxiously glancing at her as they sat together after dinner. She would not give him any music, and after sitting silent for some time, jumped up, and stood looking absently into the fire.

"What's wrong, Baby?" he asked, drawing her down on his knee. "Aren't you well, sweetheart?"

Her heart was too full to speak. She made a little grieved mouth like the baby he loved to call her, and hid her face on his shoulder.

"What is it, darling? Do tell me what is wrong, and trust to me to put it right."

She clung round his neck and cried bitterly.

"Oh, Cecil, I have so loved and trusted you," she murmured through her sobs. "How could you deceive me?"

"Deceive you? Why, darling, I have never deceived you, never."

She raised herself suddenly, and looked deep into his eyes; those clear, candid, dark grey eyes.

"Cecil, whose photograph is that you were looking at this morning so intently that you did not hear me come in to say 'Good-bye'? Who is that beautiful girl?"

Cecil crimsoned from brow to chin, put his wife hastily off his knee, and began to pace the room in agitated silence. At last he stopped in front of the chair where Nell sat, a little heap of misery, and picked her up in his arms like a child.

"Little Nell," he said, in a voice of exceeding tenderness, "you must not be jealous of the dead."

Nell started, and looked up incredulously.

"What a jealous Baby it is!" he went on, fondly pressing the little hot, flushed cheek to his own. "Shall I tell you all about the original of that photograph, Nell? I ought to have done so before I married you, perhaps, but I thought it best to 'let the dead past bury its dead.'

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"Well, Baby, when I first met Patricia Stanley she was a very young girl, an orphan, and alone in the world except for a sister, a baby three or four years old. I sought the sisters out at their father's request.

"He had saved my life at the cost of his own, and his last words were to ask me to look after his little girls.

"They were very poor, but Patricia refused all help, and I did not know how to assist her. I admired her beauty, but I did not love her, and therefore I did wrong when I asked her to marry me. It was the quixotic act of a very young man, for I was just one-and-twenty."

Nell looked up again quickly. The wood-elf must have been cleverly made up, for she had looked quite a young girl.

"Well, we married."

"*What?*" broke in Nell, almost screaming. "You *married* her?"

"Yes. Remember I did not know you then. It is more than fourteen years ago, and you were a real baby then, a tot in the nursery. And I never loved her, Nell; I never loved anyone but you. And she is dead, dear."

Nell tore herself from his arms, and stood facing him, white and rigid.

"You *married* her," she repeated. "Then, as we live and breathe, Cecil, she is your wife to-day, and I—what am I?"

"But I tell you she is *dead*, darling."

"And *I* tell you that if that photograph I saw you looking at this morning represents your first wife, she is alive and well. I saw her myself this very day."

"A chance resemblance. Come, Baby," and he drew her to his arms again, "let me finish, and then we'll forget it all and be happy again. I have not a word to say against Patricia, but we were not suited to each other, and I was not happy. I tried to make her happy, and she loved me, but it was not a union of hearts.

"Shortly after our marriage an uncle of hers died out in Australia, and left her a large fortune, and this place, the Grange, so she would have been well provided for without my marrying her. She made a will then, leaving everything to her sister Violet, who, of course, lived with us, and was a dear little thing, and to me, in case of Violet's death.

"In the second year of our marriage Violet was sent by the doctor to Eastbourne after an attack of bronchitis, and Patricia went with her. The boarding-house where they stayed was burnt to the ground one night, and Patricia, Violet, and the maid were burnt to death."

"How terrible! Then if Violet had lived she would have inherited her sister's property."

"Certainly; and this dear old house we love so much. Poor Patricia, it was a sad fate. And so, as I was looking for some papers this morning, I came upon her photograph, and I felt sad to think that she perished so young, and that I had never loved her. I know how sweet love is, for I love my Nell."

A few days later Nell was told that a young man wished to see her. He had asked first for Mr. Bertram, but learning that he was out, he requested to see Mrs. Bertram. He was a good-looking young fellow, not quite a gentleman, but still with a certain polish of manner and educated speech. Nell asked him to state his business.

"I have reason to believe that my wife is Mr. Bertram's sister," he began.

"Mr. Bertram has no sister," said Nell, frigidly.

"Sister-in-law, then. My name is Taylor—George Taylor. A year ago I married a girl my mother had adopted. More then fourteen years ago my mother, then newly widowed, was staying at Eastbourne with my two-year-old sister.

"The boarding-house where they were staying was burnt out, and little Violet lost her life.

"The nurse was killed too, so when my mother claimed another little girl as her own there was no one to contradict.

"This little one had lost all her people in the fire, and nearly lost her wits too through the fright. She was older than my sister, being quite four or five, but she could say nothing about herself beyond that her name was Violet.

"I was at school at the time, but of course I knew that the child wasn't my sister, though my mother told me nothing about her then. We're a theatrical family, and Violet seemed to take to the boards quite naturally.

"When my mother was dying some months ago, she told me she knew who Violet was, only she was so desperate at losing her own little one that she had resolved never to give her up. She told me all she knew, and I have been making inquiries ever since. Recently I have discovered that Mr. Bertram is Violet's brother-in-law."

During this long speech Nell's mind had been rapidly working. If Violet Stanley were alive, Violet Stanley was the mistress of the Grange, and owner of quite half Cecil's income. If Cecil knew of her existence, he would at once hand over house and money to her. Therefore, he must never know it.

"This is a somewhat far-fetched story," she remarked superciliously, "and very—very theatrical. Such things do not occur in real life. But even supposing your wife should be the sister of my husband's late wife, what then? She had no claim on him."

"No legal claim, of course," admitted Taylor. "But—we are very poor. I am resting at present, and my wife's pay is very small. I thought—perhaps—when can I see Mr. Bertram?"

"My husband is abroad," said Nell very sharply, "so you can't see him, and I shan't give you his address. He shan't be worried by you; but if a ten-pound note will be of any use to you, here it is."

Taylor gratefully accepted the money, and withdrew, leaving Nell to plume herself on the address with which she had managed the affair and finally disposed of it. She had yet to learn:

What a tangled web we weave
When first we practise to deceive.

A few weeks had passed without a sign from Taylor, when, one evening a note was brought to her, which proved to be from the young actor, asking for more money, and hinting that he had suspicions his wife was entitled to property from her sister.

"What's wrong, Baby?" asked Cecil, glancing up from his newspaper. "You look queer. From whom is that letter?"

"From Taylor," she replied absently. "From my dressmaker, I mean."

"Is it a bigger bill than poor Baby's dress-allowance will cover?" laughed her husband. "And would she like a little cheque to help out?"

"Oh, I should, Cecil!" came in tones more earnest than he was prepared for. "Oh, I *should* be glad of it!"

"I'll write one to-morrow, then. I don't like to see Baby's brow puckered like that. Or—let me have the bill, and I'll settle it for you. That will be best." He extended his hand to take the paper she held, but Nell hastily threw it into the fire, and, flushed and tearful, turned to face her husband.

"What does this mean, Nell?" he asked in a changed voice. "Why am I not to see that bill? Is it a bill at all? Are you deceiving me?"

Nell burst into tears, which naturally did not soothe her husband.

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"That does no good, Nell. I must have a full explanation of your conduct. I don't want to be suspicious, but your manner is so extraordinary, and you have been so unlike yourself these last few days that I can't helping seeing there is something wrong. Now, trust me, dear, and tell me all about it."

But Nell sobbed on helplessly, and though he was wonderfully patient and tender with her, he could get no explanation. Consequently, relations were somewhat strained for the next few days, and the promised cheque was not forthcoming.

Another letter came from Taylor to say that Violet was seriously ill, and he must press for assistance from Mrs. Bertram. He said he was making inquiries as to what claims Violet had to her sister's property, and insisted on seeing Mr. Bertram, who must now have returned from abroad.

Driven frantic, Nell dispatched all the money she had in the house, and wrote that her husband had gone to Australia, and would not return under six months.

She hoped by this letter to free herself from Taylor's importunities for some time to come; but barely a week had passed—a week of miserable estrangement between husband and wife—when, as she sat down to lunch a message was brought her that a Mr. Taylor wished to speak with her on pressing business.

Cecil watched the little face opposite him change to a vivid scarlet, and then to a deadly white, but he said nothing. In a hurried undertone Nell sent word that she would be with Mr. Taylor in a few minutes.

"Who is it wishes to see you?" asked her husband quietly, and, as she stammered out a few incoherent words, he continued, "Your dressmaker, perhaps. She seems a formidable person. Do not keep her waiting."

Taylor was pacing the room impatiently when Mrs. Bertram entered it.

"Violet is dying!" he said abruptly. "Pneumonia has set in, and the doctor gives no hope. Curiously enough her memory has come back to her after lying dormant all these years. She remembers Mr. Bertram perfectly, and longs to see him, but, as that cannot be, she wishes to see you."

"To see *me*. Oh, no, I cannot come!"

"You cannot refuse the prayer of a dying girl. I have promised to take you back with me."

"I can't! I really can't! It's impossible!"

"Impossible to refuse, you mean. Get ready quickly and come with me."

And, overborne by the man's strength of will, Nell yielded.

"Wait a moment. I will get ready and come with you directly," she said, turning to the door, which opened before she could touch the handle, and Cecil stood there.

"And may I ask who is this gentleman with whom you are going away?" asked the cold, clear voice.

Nell collapsed on a couch and began to cry. Cecil turned to the young man.

"Perhaps you will kindly inform me why Mrs. Bertram is going with you, and what your business is here?" he said sternly.

Taylor looked at him uncertainly.

"I don't know what right you have to ask," he began, "This lady——"

"This lady is *my wife*," said Cecil briefly.

Taylor looked bewildered.

"Mr. Bertram? Have you returned from Australia then?"

"Australia? Never was in Australia in my life. What do you mean?"

"I thought it was Australia," replied Taylor meekly; "but perhaps it was America. Anyhow, Mrs. Bertram said you were abroad and weren't coming home under six months, so——"

"Mrs. Bertram said?—Nell said?" gasped Cecil. "Oh, this is madness. There isn't a gleam of reason in the whole affair. I don't know who you are, but there's something here that wants a lot of explanation, and I mean to have it. My wife won't speak, so you've got to. Now, explain."

And Taylor explained.

There was a dead silence when he had finished. Nell simply dared not look at her husband, and she shivered as his voice, cold as ice, cleft the silence.

"I will come with you at once, Taylor, and see my poor little sister. We must have better medical advice. Come!"

Without a word to his wife, Cecil left the room with Taylor, leaving Nell utterly crushed.

"He'll never forgive me!" she moaned. "I've told him too many lies. I used to think I could never be so mean as to say what wasn't true, but directly I'm really tempted I tell lies like — like — oh, Ananias and Sapphira simply aren't in it with me. Cecil can never forgive me, and directly he comes back he'll turn me out. I'd better go at once. I dare say Aunt Hattie will take me in."

But Nell was too spent with weeping to make any move for some time, and it was quite three hours later that she was crawling broken-heartedly along the deserted road to the nearest station, the rain beating down on her defenceless head, for in her flight from her outraged husband she had not thought of anything so unromantic as an umbrella.

A man driving past in a station fly glanced out at the forlorn little figure, uttered an exclamation, and in another minute Nell found herself in her husband's arms.

"Where are you going?" he asked anxiously; and a few sobbing words made him understand the situation. "You sweet idiot!" he went on, "you silly baby, come, jump into here, and we'll get home in no time. Why, you're soaked, you naughty child! There, now we're off, and you shall have the scolding you deserve. Aren't you ashamed of yourself, Nell?"

"Oh, I am—I am! But, tell me, Cecil, is Violet dead?"

"Not she, getting on all right, the doctors say. Nell, you need not trouble to explain. I know all about it. You thought if Violet were alive she would have the Grange, and you didn't want me to lose it. Well, if you had come straight to your husband like a sensible girl instead of getting all tangled up in a web of deceit, your mind would have been relieved at once.

"Patricia left everything to Violet with a reversion to me in case of her sister's death, but she stipulated that Violet was not to marry before she was twenty-five. If she did so she forfeited the Grange entirely, and was to inherit twenty thousand pounds only—a nice little sum with which she is quite satisfied. Now, Baby, promise never to tell fibs again, and we'll kiss and be friends, and you shall never hear another word about your naughtiness from me."

And Nell was so overcome by this unlooked-for generosity that she could only cling round her husband's neck in a mute embrace more eloquent than words.

Vera Serkoff.

Sandstone: "Weren't you dancing with Miss Calloway last night?" Fiddleback: "Yes; how did you know?" Sandstone: "I saw her going into a chiropodist's this morning."

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A Race for Happiness.

Telling of a Bicycle Ride and the Winning of a Wife.

"I'm afraid poor old Uncle Herbert is really going to make a 'die' of it this time," my chum Westropp said as he stuffed a letter he had just re-read back into its envelope again. "Phyllis writes me he isn't expected to live through the week."

"Well, I suppose, old chap," said I, "that he'll leave you his fortune, and then all your scruples about marrying an heiress will be overcome. Phyllis Westropp's a pretty name," I added musingly as I lay back in my armchair and watched my cigarette smoke curling out through the window into the summer night air.

"Don't be a fool," said Westropp; then, after a long pause, which I believe he utilised to cover an incipient blush, "Uncle Herbert's such a queer old chap, he changes his mind about the property once a month; it must cost him a perfect fortune in wills. One month I'm to have the old place and the next it's that fellow Lawton—nice mess he'll make of it too if he gets it."

"Anyway he can't will the beautiful Phyllis away."

"Of course he can't, but don't you see if I'm a pauper that won't help me much; I'd rather sweep a crossing than propose to a girl with £10,000 a year."

"Well, I've discussed that point till I'm sick of you and your affairs. Pass the whisky; thanks! All I know is that if I was in love with an heiress and was pretty sure she cared for me I'd give up all idea of amateur crossing sweeping."

It was a lovely night last June that the above conversation took place; we had finished dinner in the pretty little flat in South Kensington that my chum and I occupied conjointly.

A long pause ensued after my last remark—one of those pauses that are the proofs of true friendship, and then Westropp started the everlasting topic—bicycle! He and I had just invested in a new tandem, and we had done some very excellent times on it; we—though I say it who shouldn't—were both first-class riders, and we went splendidly in double harness, so much so that a prominent cycling firm had offered to give us a machine if we would try to break some road records for them.

We talked on for about an hour, discussing gears, pedals, saddles, records, and such like, and the clock had just struck eleven when the maid brought in a telegram and handed it to my companion; he glanced over it, and then handed it to me. It ran—

"*Come at once. My guardian can't last out night. Says he will leave property to whichever nephew arrives first.*

"PHYLLIS."

Scarcely had I put down the pinky-brown paper when the door opened and Mr. Lawton was announced. He nodded curtly to us and then at the telegram.

"Oh, you've got one too," he said. "Pity, isn't it, Westropp, that the last train for Oxford has left Paddington," and he smiled maliciously at us. It was an open secret that my chum and he detested one another.

"May I ask to what cause I may attribute the pleasure of your visit?" Westropp said sarcastically, as he indicated a chair.

"Oh, I only just popped in on my way down to Oxford to see how you'd take the idea of being too late."

"Well, you might have saved yourself the trouble and me the annoyance. Good-night."

"All right, I'm just off; but I flattered myself you'd enjoy hearing how I'm going to manage this little biz. You've heard of Doyen, of course, one of the crack cycling 'pros.'? Well, he's waiting outside with a tandem, and he and I are going to Oxford by road. Pity you've not got a 'pro.' up your sleeve too."

"Get out!" said Westropp, rising to his feet and pointing to the door, and Lawton got out, but as he reached the hall door he stopped, and called back—

"By the way, I heard you were rather good on a cycle, and as I saw two singles in the outside hall I took the precaution of cutting the tyres open. I owed you a grudge for cutting me out with the beautiful Phyllis, and I came round to-night to pay it you in full. So long," and this loathsome young fellow shut the door and clattered down the stairs, four at a time.

We looked at one another aghast for a minute, and then we both ejaculated together:

"Lucky he didn't know we had a tandem."

"We'll break the London-Oxford record to-night, anyhow," I said a few minutes later as I was changing out of my smoking jacket into a cycling costume.

"Begorra, we'll teach that spalpeen to ride," ejaculated Westropp through a shirt into which he was struggling. My chum always lapsed into his native Irish brogue in moments of excitement.

Five minutes later we were in the saddle, and as we flew past the church in the Earl's Court Road the clock struck half-past eleven. Lawton had ten minutes' start. We were going by the Henley route, as old General Lambert's house was on that road, some three miles out of Oxford.

We were just getting into full swing as we passed Olympia, and our ninety-six gear was spinning round with a delightful churning-grinding noise. The few policemen we passed blew their whistles right lustily.

"Bedad, and it'll take a steam roller all its time to stop this old 'yoke' now. Fancy you a-thrying to stop it with a sax-

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penny whistle!" shouted Westropp, as we left one of these disgusted 'Bobbys' behind us.

"That's it, lad, that's it! Run like the dickens and begorra! we'll make the pace for you down to Hounslow!" he cried to a more active member of the force who gave chase. "Sure that man was too 'low-geared' to 'take us on,'" he added to me as the discomfited Peeler slowed up and resumed his majestic dot-and-carry-one walk.

Hammersmith, Gunnersbury, Kew, and Brentford came up one by one out of the darkness, winked at us with dirty yellow gas lamps, and then dropped behind. We were exhilarated by the lovely night air, and the head wind only got our "danders" up and made us work the harder.

Swishity-swishity-swishity-swish! And the grand old tandem seemed to waken to life beneath us like some thoroughbred steeplechaser determined to win the race for its master.

A cloud of dust got up behind our back wheel and gave chase all along the road. "Hounslow—ten miles in twenty-three minutes!" Westropp yelled into my ear as we streaked past the clock.

"Now for a pacy seven miles," I cry, as we clear the fork roads, and we bring every muscle of our bodies into play; gradually our heads get down lower and lower, and the strain on my arms and shoulders (I am steering) becomes well-nigh unendurable as the pace increases.

Faster and faster and faster we go until the "swishity-swish" of our ninety-six gear fades into the everlasting "t—s—s—s—s" of what might be a sixty-geared machine.

Colnbrook and Slough leave Buckinghamshire to meet us—twenty miles in forty-six minutes! The very pace we cleave the air is beginning to tell and on the front seat I gasp for air, and I can hear Westropp's breath coming in gasps.

Three of the young bloods of the place who are going home arm in arm to steady themselves greet us with "A bicycle built for two," but we are out of earshot before they can hiccough out the second line.

As the last house of the long straggling town fades out of sight I can just make out a shadow moving along the road a few hundred yards ahead—another half minute and we can make out a tandem by the aid of the full moon.

An extra pressure on the pedal and we are riding abreast of our rivals! Lawton swears softly in gasps, and the Frenchman bites a "*Sacré-bleu!*" off his tongue and settles himself down to race.

"Come on, you brutes, ifye're coming," Westropp ejaculates, and they do come on—they pass us—we pick them up; they forge ahead again—we ride abreast, and I can see the perspiration on the Frenchman's eyelids gather in thick drops and run down his cheek; and so neck and neck we race on, through Taplow and across the sleeping Thames, through Maidenhead, and now Castle Hill bars our way.

The pedals go round perceptibly slower as the steep ascent and rough surface begin to kill our pace. Every muscle is strained to the utmost; the Frenchman seems to be licking the dust off his front tyre.

On, on, through the night we four men race for a woman and a fortune. Hedges, gates, cottages and trees skim past unnoticed.

Another terrific hill leaves us panting and aching in every fibre some twenty yards ahead; but Doyen isn't to be beaten. He remembers the Bordeaux-Paris race he won last year, and we rush, bump, and skid down Henley hill side by side, through the peacefully sleeping town, and out again into the moonlit country.

"Thirty-four miles in an hour and twenty-four minutes," Westropp tells me as we settled down to the "Fair Mile."

"Surely we've broken some record!" I think, but haven't breath to say.

Side by side the two tandems start to negotiate the three miles of up hill to Nettlebed. The perspiration is running from us in streams.

How we reach the apex of the Chilterns I cannot tell. I only know that the four of us are working out our souls, and the live steel beneath me seems to leap with joy as we rush down a steep decline

We leave the last slope of the Chilterns, and Doyen and Lawton make a final sprint. They are going to pieces now; instead of the even push-and-pull they are jerking their cranks round.

As they gradually move past us I hear Lawton whisper to his companion in French, "I'm done! We can't beat them! We must upset them!"

I translate to Westropp and grasp my handles firmly. Now at last my trick-riding will be of some avail. Many a time in my volunteer corps have I practised riding over supposed wounded men. I grind my teeth as we draw nearer to our rivals and increase the pace.

"Now, lad, show the craytures what you can do, and the Lord be with us all!" And I can hear my chum's teeth snap together as he nerves himself to the ordeal.

We are riding six inches to the right and to the rear of our rivals. Suddenly I hear their brake scream against their tyres and they make a half-right turn.

Crash! Bang! Crash! A thud! A muttered oath! Our noble yoke leaps in the air! I hold on for dear life. A bump and a rattle, and—we are over them and safe.

"Lord, lad, you can ride!" and Westropp's hand on my shoulder is like a vice. I take my hand off the handlebars and put it in his—no need for words, we understand what is in each other's hearts.

A hundred yards behind the moon is shining on a mass of crumpled tubes and twisted steel, and I can just make out two dark forms huddled together on the hard white road.

Mile posts come running up like baby ghosts as we spin along through Benson, Dorchester, and Nuneham. We turn up a wide avenue and glide noiselessly up to a fine old manor house. We throw ourselves off to the right, and the tandem falls to the left. Westropp leaps up to the porch and rings the bell.

Phyllis herself opens it and the light in the hall seems to make a halo of her silky-golden hair.

"Thank Heaven, Terence, you're in time." I see him take her hand, and bend his head down close to hers, and then I see—that our lamp is smoking, and that the dear old machine would be all the better for a little oil.

How long I stood out there in the shrubbery I do not know. The old house brought back many memories of my Oxford days when Terence and I were up at college together.

'Twas under yonder elm two years ago that my chum had first confided in me his love for Phyllis. I remember it as if it were yesterday. Aye, and I remember the fierce struggle in my breast as I had pressed his hand and wished him "Good luck!" Since that day I hadn't seen Phyllis again.

As I stand leaning on the machine that has carried us so well I hear a voice by my side that brings me back from my memories, and a dainty little hand is placed in mine, and I am looking down into two soft brown eyes.

"Terence has just told me what you have done for him—for us"—and a blush suffuses her soft velvet skin—"this evening, Mr. Cuthbert, and I'm going to thank you as best I can. You may kiss me if you like," and she frankly offers a dimpled cheek that sets the blood racing through my veins. I feel that I have tasted the greatest joy of my life. My exertions have been paid for a million times.

* * * * * * *

"Congratulate me, old man, on having won the sweetest little woman in the world, thanks to you. God bless you, lad!"

"Allow me to congratu——" I try to pull myself together. "I'm awfully glad," I add tamely, as I turn my head to gaze down the drive.

"Well, you don't seem in the least pleased! Hang it, man, you might show a little more enthusiasm!" and he places a hand on my shoulder and we stand face to face. His steel blue eyes change from wrath to wonder at what they read in mine. "Good Heavens! What's the matter, Reggie! What do you mean?"

"Nothing, old chap; only don't ask me to be 'best man,' that's all." I take his arm, and I notice that the blood is trickling from a cruel bite in his lower lip, as we go silently back into the house together. **A. H. Trapman.**

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THE MYSTERY OF ADAM BARR.

An Editor's Love Story.

BASIL MAYNE sat in the editor's chair at the offices of the *Grecian Magazine*. There was plenty of work to be done, and he was not the man to shirk it.

Healthy, active, intellectual, Basil Mayne was at two-and-thirty as fine a specimen of mankind as could be met with in the vicinity of Fleet Street. He was handsome too, and yet, despite this additional charm to his already striking personality, he was still a bachelor.

Not that he advocated the wisdom of celibacy. Indeed, he had arrived at that age when the inefficiencies of the genus housekeeper make a man desirous of changing his condition. There is but one antidote for this disease, and Basil Mayne did not deny its efficacy. But as yet he had not prescribed it for himself.

He had just laid down his pen for a momentary respite when the door opened, and the sub. entered the sanctum.

"Here is another story from Joan Barr," he said, "which, if I am not mistaken, will confirm your former opinion of her ability."

Basil Mayne took the MS. in question, and glanced quickly over the first page.

"It begins well," he said.

"And ends better," added the sub. with enthusiasm.

"But who is this Joan Barr?" said Basil, knitting his brows and mentally cataloguing the known writers of the day.

"That I cannot discover," replied the sub. "She appears to be quite unknown as yet. But that will probably not last long, for her stories will bear comparison with any on the market."

"I think you are right, Weston," said the editor thoughtfully. "At least, so far as her former story is concerned. I have yet to read this." And he touched the neatly-typed MS. which lay on the table. "By the way," he added, after a pause, "did any communication accompany it?"

"Yes," replied the sub. "I will send it in." And he withdrew from the room.

Basil Mayne picked up the MS. and began to read. Before he had come to the end of the first quarto sheet his attention was riveted on the story. Every passage bore the hall-mark of truth. Every incident stood out in bold relief.

Humour and pathos tripped one upon the other in the fresh, crisp sentences which followed each other in such harmonious sequence.

The whole story was real—unmistakably and intensely real—and that carried him on, through page after page, till, with a sigh, he came to the last word and leant back in his chair with a glow of pleasure on his handsome face.

"The woman's a genius!" he said admiringly. "I suppose it *is* a woman, though the name may be a pseudonym. I wonder who she is."

His eye fell on the letter which the sub. had sent in. He took it up and examined it critically. It was written in a clear, feminine hand, and ran as follows:

"*Ivy Lodge, Finchwood, Surrey.*

"*Dear Sir,—The gratifying reception accorded to my previous contribution to the Grecian Magazine has induced me to submit a second for your kind consideration.*

"*Should this also suit your requirements I shall be happy to hear from you in the usual way.—Yours very truly,*

"JOAN BARR."

Basil smiled.

"A practical business letter," he said musingly, "with no more words than are necessary. I wish all my correspondents were as considerate of an editor's time." And he glanced whimsically at a pile of unread communications which lay on the table beside him.

"But who, in the name of fortune, is this Joan Barr? Surely she is no mere novice, taking her first plunge into the stormy sea of literature? If so, she has little to learn from experience. But I must find out. It might be a good thing for the *Grecian*. Something permanent might be arranged, and then—— I'll drop her a line and ask her to run up to town."

He took a sheet of paper from the rack before him and prepared to write. But just as his pen touched the paper he paused, and, pushing it from him, said:

"No—I'm hanged if I do! I'll run down to Finchwood myself, and try to get a glimpse of this rising star in the firmament of literature. I'll go incog. too, and perhaps, if I'm lucky, obtain an introduction to Miss Joan Barr; though how that is to be accomplished Heaven only knows!"

He rose.

"Pooh!" he muttered. "What an ass I am! For all I know, she may be a middle-aged spinster or the curate's wife, or some other, to me, uninteresting specimen of womanhood. Well, if so, I can come back. In any case a week-end in the little Surrey village of Finchwood will do me more good than harm these bright Spring days. So I'll go. That's settled."

He seated himself once more in the editorial chair and gave himself up to the business of the day. But throughout it all the name of Joan Barr stared at him persistently from the title-page of the MS. which lay on his table. Nor did it forsake him when he put on his hat at the close of the day's work and returned to his house in Highgate and the remainder of his housekeeper's inefficiencies.

The afternoon was well advanced when, the following Saturday, Basil Mayne alighted at the little Surrey station of Finchwood. The meadows were yellow with cowslips and primroses, over which the cool Spring breeze gambolled, and mingled with its own freshness their fragrance.

Exhilaration was in the very air, and Basil Mayne was not the man to be unconscious of its influence.

He walked along the white, winding country road with a light, elastic step, and was soon standing at the door of the village inn—called by courtesy a "hotel"—where arrangements for his accommodation were speedily effected. Then, after a cup of tea, he lit a cigar and sauntered out in search of Ivy Lodge.

It is more than probable this task might have been much

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more difficult than one might imagine, for he wished, if possible, to avoid any inquiry as to its situation, in order that the object of his visit, as well as his identity, might not thereby reach the ear of Joan Barr.

What he wanted was to meet this unknown woman who wrote with such intense realism and purity of thought and diction, not as the editor of the *Grecian*, but as a casual visitor to the little village.

He wanted, in short, to take her off her guard. Precisely *why* he wanted this he did not stop to inquire; and, even had he done so, the result would, in all probability, have been the same.

But Fortune favoured him.

He had just turned into a shady lane when his eye rested on a small, exquisitely-kept cottage, over which the trailing ivy spread its dark-green leaves and clinging tendrils till every trace of stone or brick was lost to view.

A little garden stood in front, tastefully arranged and fragrant with sweet Spring flowers. And on the low wooden gate which led within, and opened from the lane, Basil Mayne read the inscription, "Ivy Lodge."

He passed the house at a leisurely pace, his eye taking in every detail of its appearance, from the pretty gilt vane upon the roof to the neatly-trimmed box-borders of the flower garden.

"Modest," was his inward comment, "but decidedly tasteful. Not too neat to be prim, but just enough to be 'home.' Ah, what a thing it is to live in a home, and not a 'desirable residence!'" And he sighed as he went on past the pretty little cottage and down the quiet country lane.

Presently he turned and retraced his steps. It was growing dusk now, and a soft, serene hush lay, like an angel's wing, over the smiling landscape—a hush which the jubilant singing of wood birds among the trees served only to intensify.

Stopping before the gate of Ivy Lodge, and partly screened by the tall hedge which inclosed the garden, Basil Mayne looked once more at the cottage within.

As he did so, the graceful figure of a girl came out from behind the hedge and approached the gate. She started when she saw him and hesitated. The last lingering light of evening shone full on her face, and Basil was struck by its rare and sensitive beauty.

Most men of his age would have experienced a feeling of embarrassment at being thus discovered. But Basil Mayne, in his intercourse with the world, had learnt that art of perfect self-possession which, when acquired, lends both charm and dignity to the character. Lifting his hat, therefore, and with a frank, winning smile on his handsome face, he said:

"If to sin with one member is to sin with all, I am afraid you have discovered me in the act of trespassing. I trust I may be pardoned, however, for admiring what is so inexpressibly beautiful."

He waved his hand indicatively to the tastefully-arranged flower-beds, but his eyes still rested on the lovely face of the girl before him. A soft flush deepened the delicate beauty of her cheek at the subtle, gracefully-veiled compliment of the tall, handsome stranger, and her eyes fell.

"I am glad our little garden affords pleasure to others as well as ourselves," she said. "But," deprecatingly, "it is so very small!"

"Perhaps that is one of its chief attractions," said Basil quietly, while the girl looked at him wonderingly. "One often sees a cottage which is more pleasing to the eye than the lordliest palace. And possibly the same truth is responsible for both these apparent incongruities, since the loveliness of a spot and the sweet influences of a home are not determined by their superficial area."

The girl looked up brightly, the large eyes expressing their appreciation of Basil's words.

"Perhaps you have experienced the beauty of both influences?" she said timidly, and then blushed at the boldness of the implied question.

Basil Mayne smiled, and a moment later sighed.

"The first—yes," he said; "for, with two good eyes in one's head, it was impossible to do otherwise. But the second is not so readily acquired, and, having hitherto escaped me, I am compelled to worship from afar."

The girl felt his eyes upon her, and turned away her head.

"I am afraid this is very unconventional," Basil continued with a return to his genial manner. "But I trust you will pardon my apparent presumption and blame, not me, but the irresistible loveliness which seems so peculiar a characteristic of this ideal spot." And, once more lifting his hat and courteously inclining his head, he moved away.

As he did so the door of the little cottage opened, and a deep, manly voice called:

"Joan! Joan!"

"Ah!" murmured Basil to himself, "so my fair contributor is neither a middle-aged spinster nor a curate's wife! Well, so much the better!"

The next day being Sunday, the landlord of the inn found leisure from his accustomed duties to converse with his guest. He was exceedingly communicative, and from him Basil Mayne learnt many things. Breakfast over, the latter offered his cigar-case to the attentive landlord, and, after one or two purposeless observations, casually remarked:

"By the way, to whom does that pretty little cottage known as Ivy Lodge belong? I passed it in the course of my walk last evening, and could not help remarking its aspect of freshness and homeliness."

The landlord's countenance assumed a solemn expression.

"Ah!" he said in a whisper, "there's a mystery about him. Adam Barr he calls himself, sir, though folks *do* say it might be anything else for all *we* know. He come here about six year ago from nobody knows where, takes and shuts himself up in Ivy Lodge, and—excepting a 'Good-morning,' or a 'Good-evening,' never speaks to nobody."

"Perhaps he prefers solitude," suggested Basil.

"Then he didn't ought to grumble," retorted the landlord, "for he gets it, year in and year out. All the six year he's lived in Finchwood he's never put his foot in my bar! Solitood!" grunted the landlord indignantly. "Well, let them as likes it have it. But *I* likes a man to be sociable-like—what you London gen'lmen calls 'greengarious'—*that's* what I likes!"

"I don't doubt it," said Basil innocently. "But you see we are what Nature has formed us, and we must not be too hard on a man because, in this respect, he shows himself to be less enlightened than you or I."

The landlord thoughtfully caressed his ample chin and appeared somewhat mollified.

"Well, there may be something in that," he said. "But he's a queer character for all that. He goes up to London now and then, and always carries a suspicious-looking black bag along with him. Sometimes he's gone for two or three days, but mostly he catches the night train, stays overnight in London, and comes back the next morning."

The landlord looked significantly at his visitor.

"So his work's done in the night," he said in a low, impressive voice. "And he takes precious good care to keep it to himself. Nobody knows where he goes or what he does, and there are some as say out plain that Adam Barr's bread is not got honest."

Basil Mayne puffed thoughtfully at his cigar.

"That is scarcely a charitable view of the matter," he said.

The landlord looked suspicious.

"Perhaps you're a friend of his?" he suggested.

"Not I!" replied Basil with a laugh. "But, tell me, has he any family? I thought I saw a young lady in the garden yesterday."

The landlord's face brightened perceptibly.

"Ah!" he said enthusiastically, "and as sweet a flower as ever lived among us! She's his daughter Joan, and wonderful clever she be, too! I heard the schoolmaster say t'other day she'd taken to writing for the big London papers. She's a kind word and a smile for everyone, sir, and we're all proud of her—every man Jack of us!

"Of course, she's far and away above the likes of us, but she never makes us feel it when she's talking to us, like the

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parson's wife and daughters. She's a lady—that's what she is!"

There was a pleased light in Basil Mayne's eyes as he listened to this glowing and evidently sincere eulogy of the girl in whom, within the past few days, he had taken so strong and unaccountable an interest—an interest generated at first by purely business considerations, but which, now that he had seen her, was fast developing into a more ardent sentiment.

"The girl has no mother," went on the landlord with a sigh; "and, except for one servant—who knows as little about her master as we do, sir—Adam Barr and his sweet young daughter live quite alone at Ivy Lodge."

Basil Mayne put on his hat and, going out, sauntered leisurely along the quiet country lanes, speculating as he went as to the possible nature of the occupation which had bred such unqualified suspicion and distrust in the minds of the villagers towards Adam Barr.

Mechanically he wandered in the direction of Ivy Lodge, and presently saw approaching him the graceful figure of Joan on her way to church.

He was not the man to take undue advantage of the fortunate circumstance which had led to their conversation of the previous day. So he merely acknowledged her in passing, and was rewarded by a gracious smile in return.

But that evening chance again led him across her path; this time on the outskirts of the village, and, their direction being the same, Basil asked to be allowed to accompany her.

Thus, step by step, the chance meeting by the little low gate of Ivy Lodge ripened slowly but surely into an intimacy as welcome to one as the other; and Basil Mayne became a frequent visitor to the little village of Finchwood.

But everywhere he heard the same dark rumours of Adam Barr, the same covert hints as to the nature of his occupation, and although they lacked foundation, no answer, explanation or refutation was forthcoming to effectually silence the universal suspicion.

Basil had, in the village, adopted the name of Bernard May, for, as yet, he did not wish his identity as editor of the *Grecian* to become known to Joan Barr. It was more than possible his own name was known to her in that capacity, whilst the one he had assumed was an old pen name which he had several times used to sign his American contributions.

So the months sped by and acquaintanceship ripened into friendship, and friendship into love, under the genial warmth of the all-developing sun and the softening influence of the summer moon.

But still no solution came to the problem:

"Who is Adam Barr?"

* * * *

One evening in August, Basil Mayne and Joan Barr were sauntering together through some old woods on the outskirts of the village. Few of their walks now were the outcome of chance, and this one had been prearranged at Basil's earnest request.

For some time they walked along in silence, and then, stopping suddenly, Basil took the girl's hand in his, and, with quiet, steady earnestness, said—

"Joan, I cannot longer keep silence. For months past—from the very day when I—a stranger in Finchwood—saw you standing in the dusk by the gate of your garden—I have loved you with an intensity of which I had before never believed myself capable. And now there is but one hope in my heart, the hope that you, who have won my love, will consent to become my wife."

The girl's eyes drooped, but, lifting them for an instant, Basil saw the happy light that shone in their blue depths, and his heart bounded with exultation.

"Joan," he said tenderly, "may I hope that the love I thus yield to you is not without its response in your own heart?"

The little hand trembled in his as, lifting her eyes, she said—

"I have loved you from the first, Bernard."

Basil smiled as he heard the name.

"I am afraid," he said, "I must plead guilty to a little innocent deception. My name is not Bernard May."

Joan looked up in unmistakable surprise.

"Not—Bernard—May?" she said in bewilderment.

"You have never even inquired who or what I am," he said banteringly, smiling down into the lovely face. "Truly, love is blind!"

Joan lifted her head proudly.

"I knew you were a gentleman," she said simply, "and I left the rest to you."

Basil stooped and kissed her tenderly, almost reverently.

"God keep me worthy of such love!" he said earnestly. "No, Joan, my name is not Bernard May, that is a pen name I have adopted, my real name is Basil Mayne."

"Basil Mayne!" exclaimed Joan in surprise. "Not—not the editor of—the *Grecian?*"

"Yes, dear," said Basil, laughing at her bewilderment. "I ought not, perhaps, to have concealed it from you, but my first visit to Finchwood was made solely with a view to seeing, and, if possible, speaking with you, and, if the result were favourable, to open the negotiations, which have since been satisfactorily concluded, to secure for the *Grecian* the inestimable advantage of your literary co-operation.

"I did not, for many reasons, wish to be known to you, and it has since been a difficult matter to tell you. Thus, you see, we have the somewhat startling phenomenon of Commerce as the mother of Cupid!" And he smiled into the upturned face. Then he drew her towards him. "Am I forgiven?" he asked.

A look answered him, and he pressed the hand that lay in his.

Presently they turned and walked slowly in the direction of the village.

"I must call on your father to-morrow," said Basil meditatively.

The girl's face became grave.

"I hope he will be nice to you," she said. "But he is so reserved, and

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never converses with anyone but me."

Basil looked at the girl as she finished speaking.

"I have gathered as much from the villagers," he said quietly. "I wonder if you will think me unpardonably curious if I ask what your father is."

A look of perplexity, almost of anxiety, came into Joan's face.

"I really do not know," she said. "The subject is never mentioned between us. He goes occasionally to London by the night train, and generally returns in the morning, and, though I know these irregular excursions are in some way connected with his business, I am ignorant of its nature.

"He always has enough money, but by what means it is obtained I know no more than you. Once I questioned him on the subject, but he evaded it with so much persistency that I have never repeated it. He is my father, and I trust him. I know he loves me very dearly, and that is all I wish to know." And she looked resolutely into the face of her lover.

Basil lightly changed the conversation, and returned to the subject of their love. It was late when they reached the gate of Ivy Lodge, where he bade good-night to his promised wife, and returned to his inn, pondering still more deeply upon the mystery surrounding Adam Barr.

The following morning he rang the bell of Ivy Lodge, and a moment later found himself, for the first time, in the presence of Adam Barr. He was a tall, squarely-built man, with iron-grey hair and clear blue eyes, which now and then clouded over with an expression of deep melancholy. Quietly and briefly Basil Mayne explained the nature of his errand, and waited for a reply.

"Mr. Mayne," said Adam Barr sadly, "I have long foreseen this, and, could I have done so, would have averted it. I am afraid you have, in your love for Joan, overlooked the fact that, deservedly or otherwise, her father is the possessor of an unenviable reputation."

Basil Mayne looked straight into the old man's eyes, which returned his gaze unflinchingly.

"I will trust you for that," he said confidently, and impulsively held out his hand. But, to his surprise, Adam Barr drew back.

"My hand is not fit to touch yours," he said, turning away.

For a moment Basil stood watching the old man in unqualified astonishment.

"Pardon me," he said at last, "but your appearance does not confirm your statement. Yet such a confession is scarcely one which a man might involuntarily make without good reason."

"Unfortunately for both you and Joan, it is but too irretrievably true," replied Adam Barr sadly. "Nay, more, for, did you know what these hands of mine do, you would shrink from me."

Again Basil was silent, bewildered by the old man's words. Presently, however, he roused himself.

"May I know," he said steadily, "the nature of this dishonest or unlawful work which occupies you? The revelation would be safe with me."

Adam Barr lifted his head proudly.

"It is neither dishonest nor unlawful," he said shortly.

Basil was becoming more and more bewildered each instant.

"Pardon me," he said, "but your words admit of no other construction. If it be neither dishonest nor unlawful, for what reason should I, to adopt your own phrase, 'shrink' from you?"

"That," said the old man, "must ever remain my secret. I love my daughter far too well to risk her happiness by revealing it to one who might inadvertenly transfer it to her."

A graver shade came into Basil Mayne's face.

"Mr. Barr," he said, with emphatic earnestness, "if you withhold your consent to your daughter's union with me, you will not *risk*, but *destroy* her happiness, and you will also seriously imperil the love which she bears *you*.

"You have chosen to make me the recipient of a partial confidence where none was asked or required. Were you the most loathsome and abhorrent of all God's creatures my love for Joan would be in no wise affected or diminished."

For a moment Adam Barr gazed at the earnest, impassioned face of the man before him. The nobility and resolution of his words had touched him to the heart.

"Mr. Mayne," he said at last, "I will not stand in the way of your object, and in this I earnestly hope I am doing right. But lest the knowledge I hold in my breast some day reach my child's ears and cause her misery and unhappiness, I will give up this life that I am leading, with all its attendant horrors, and, for her sake, retire into some far corner of the earth, where the past may be forgotten.

"May God bless both her and you, and comfort a father's heart, who, for his child's sake, goes out into voluntary exile, where his solitude and old age may never be cheered by the smile and sunshine of his daughter's presence."

Three months later the marriage of Basil Mayne and Joan Barr was solemnised, and the same day Adam Barr bade farewell to his daughter and sailed for southern seas.

His departure was a great grief to Joan, who, throughout the whole of her life, never learnt the mystery attending her father's career. But a week after his departure Basil Mayne chanced to pick up a newspaper, when his eye fell on a paragraph which caused him to utter an involuntary exclamation. For this is what he read—

"*We understand that the post of public hangman has become vacant, the man who has hitherto occupied it having permanently left the country. His former assistant will probably succeed to the position thus made vacant.*"

Walter J. Mowbray.

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What's in a Name?

Being the History of Another Quarrel at Laburnum Villa.

[*"The Romance of an Unpaid Bill," which introduced Mr. and Mrs. Sinclair to readers of "Short Stories," appeared in the issue dated February 21st.*]

It was quite two years since the quarrel over the milliner's bill, which quarrel some of you may remember. And I am happy to relate that since then there had been no quarrel worth speaking of, but this one seemed to bid fair to rival its famous predecessor. This is how it happened:

Gerald was impatiently pacing the dining-room floor at Laburnum Villa, waiting to hear the verdict from upstairs. Presently the doctor entered, his face all wreathed in smiles.

"Is it a b-baby, doctor? No, confound it, I mean, is it a boy, doctor?" spluttered Gerald.

"It is, Mr. Sinclair, and a very fine specimen too," replied the doctor, as though he were commenting on the merits of a prize bull calf; but that is beside the question.

"Ha!" almost screamed the delighted Gerald; "a boy is it? Then I've got his name all ready. Gerald Arthur Sinclair, he will be. And how's Mrs. Sinclair, doctor?"

"First rate, couldn't be getting along better. Now here's the nurse with your son and heir."

Then Gerald displayed a large amount of lunacy. After having decided that there was something alive in all that mass of wrappings, and having been solemnly assured by the nurse that it was his own and they weren't trying to substitute some inferior infant on him, "For I've read of such things," he said, he held it in his arms, until the terrified nurse took her charge again and retreated.

Thenceforward Gerald was an authority on children, and the next day he took a father of fourteen children to lunch with him, and gravely contradicted all his views on the bringing-up of children. "From experience" was his favourite remark. Still, the man who had had experience didn't mind, he'd been like it himself, and, as Gerald was paying for his luncheon, he ate a great deal and smiled.

Soon, however, the time for christening the juvenile Sinclair drew near, and Ethel mooted the subject to her husband.

"Certainly, my dear, by all means have him christened," was that gentleman's lordly reply, as though he were granting a great favour.

"Of course we must have the sweet little dear christened you silly man, but what name shall the precious darling have?"

Hereafter I will not chronicle the endearing names Mrs. Sinclair used when speaking of her offspring. It is a peculiar thing, uncommon to most young mothers, I believe, but Mrs. Sinclair had come to the conclusion that there never was a baby like hers in the whole wide world.

"Name—er—oh yes, I've already got that—Gerald Arthur."

"Oh, you've already got it," repeated Mrs. Sinclair, somewhat nettled. "Then presumably I have nothing to say in the matter?"

"Peculiar thing if you don't; I never knew any matter before but what you had a great deal to say in."

"That's it, now be a brute to me!" cried Mrs. Sinclair, commencing to sob. But Gerald cut her short

"My dear, there's no logic whatever in your remarks; you——"

"Logic?" broke in Mrs. Sinclair; "I don't want to know anything about your old logic. Why don't you want the baby called Logic, you're always talking about it?"

"My dear, I could hardly misname a child of yours so."

"Your sarcasm is wasted on me, and now, once for all, I will not have my son called Gerald Arthur."

"Your son?" repeated Mr. Sinclair. "I'll have you know he's as much mine as yours. Now then, what's this foolishness about the kid's name?"

"How dare you call my son a kid?"

"Well, he bleated like one all last night so neither of us could sleep," responded her husband ungraciously. Which lack of sleep may perhaps account for the peculiar tempers that particular morning.

"That was the way you held him. You can't expect a child to do anything else but cry when you grasp him tightly round the middle like a—er—cricket bat." People are not in the habit of grasping a cricket bat tightly round the middle, but still, we will pass that over.

"Well, madam, I've not yet gone through a course of nursing lessons nor did they include that in my early training."

"Now you're getting ridiculous, and, once for all, I will not have my son called Gerald Arthur."

"You may have your son called what you like, but my son shall be christened Gerald Arthur Sinclair."

"Fancy how everyone would laugh. Look what his initials would be—G. A. S. Why, everyone would be calling him 'Gas.'"

"And everyone would say, 'How like his mother.'"

"Brute!" responded his wife.

And that was the last word spoken on the subject that morning, for presently the maid brought in the breakfast.

Gerald sat down to the table and helped himself to various edibles, and then got up and poured out his coffee. This being done, he commenced to eat. Then Ethel came to the table and did exactly the same thing.

For some unaccountable reason the morning paper had not arrived so that Gerald was unable to take refuge in man's natural morning retreat. So they both sat in stony silence.

Presently Gerald wanted some salt. Laboriously he got up and walked round to where it was just by Mrs. Sinclair's side. Noticing what he was wanting, Mrs. Sinclair picked up the salt and began to leisurely help herself. Gerald waited five seconds and then with a snort rushed out into the kitchen and returned with a great lump of cooking salt, and, taking up the bread knife, proceeded to shave some off on to his plate.

Then Mrs. Sinclair wished to cut some bread, and picking up the bread knife (which Gerald had used for the salt), gazed at it critically and laid it down again. Then she rang for the maid and told her to bring in a clean bread knife.

This sort of thing would have gone on all breakfast time, if it were not for the fact that both husband and wife noticed a book in the room. As it happened, it was the only book in the breakfast-room that morning. It was Nuttall's dictionary, a

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present to Gerald from a friend of his. A dictionary, by the way, is always such a nice friendly present to give.

Well, as I have said, husband's and wife's eyes alighted on this volume together, and in consequence they both rose together and walked to the side table where the book lay. Mrs. Sinclair seized it first, but, seeing her husband was on the same quest, she turned her nose up and released her hold and walked away to her breakfast again.

Gerald picked up the book and also sat down, and then opened it so that the title page with "Gerald N. Sinclair" written on it could be plainly seen by his wife.

He studied his name himself for some minutes and appeared to find it most diverting. He finished his breakfast with his interesting companion propped up against the bread, which gave Ethel the opportunity of ringing for a fresh loaf when she wanted some bread, which she did with the greatest apparent zest.

The air was almost blue when Gerald put on an old black cutty clay pipe, which his wife disliked more than anything. And when he walked upstairs smoking it, her rage knew no bounds. She rushed to her room, and, putting on her hat and coat, went out of the house, whilst Gerald grinned from the bathroom window as he watched her.

Mrs. Sinclair returned about lunch time; she felt she was sinking but she still kept her colours flying and her decks cleared for action. And neither spoke all lunch time. Now when they had a bad quarrel two years ago Gerald had gone to a hotel and stayed there, but he was wiser now. "No need to chuck away money on a hotel," he philosophised.

To tell the truth and shame someone or other, as the saying is, neither of them was in a temper any longer, but each still thought the other was. So that when presently an infant's howl penetrated into the dining-room Ethel rushed frantically upstairs, and Gerald's anger revived sufficiently to take him into the drawing-room and there cause him to play Chopin's Funeral March.

Suddenly there was a violent attack on the door from the other side, and it was burst open by Ethel, who came in with a rush and a scared face.

"Oh, Gerald, baby's choking! Oh, he'll die, I'm sure he will!" she cried.

Hurriedly dispatching a maid for the doctor, Gerald rushed upstairs to find that his son and heir had got the mouthpiece and guard of his feeding-bottle firmly wedged in his mouth and was going black in the face. How he had done it, Heaven and itself alone knew, but babies are marvellous creatures.

It took Gerald exactly twenty seconds to get it out, and then he returned to the dining-room whilst Ethel commenced to soothe the child.

In about a quarter of an hour's time Mrs. Sinclair entered the dining-room, and, closing the door behind her, stood still, gazing at her husband.

"Gerald," she said presently; "I'd like the boy to be called Gerald Arthur now."

She commenced this speech standing but finished it on her husband's knee.

"You'd like Gerald Arthur, would you?" replied that worthy. "Well, I've been thinking I don't care for it much now."

"Well, we must keep Gerald, at any rate."

"Yes, dear."

"And I think Austen is such a nice name for a second name. Shall we call him Gerald Austen, dear?"

"I think that sounds very well, Ethel. Yes, we'll call him that. And now, aren't you sorry you ——" But I really must break off there for the remainder of the conversation is very private.

Thus it came about that after the christening, one of Gerald the younger's uncles said to Ethel, "Queer initials you've given that nephew of mine—G. A. S., we shall have to call him 'Gas.'"

"But we altered them; we didn't call him Arthur," cried Ethel, and then she stopped as she caught her husband's eyes and heard a subdued whisper—"How like his mother."

E. Newton Bungey.

TWO WEBS OF MEMORY.

Telling of the Awakening of a Husband.

"Mildred!"

It was the young wife's name which was called, and the husband was sitting in the cosy drawing-room of their happy little home, reading by the soft light of the flickering gas burner, and resting his slippered feet upon the burnished brass fender in front of a glowing fire of rosy embers.

"Mildred!" he called again, as when a lover he breathed her name, the sweetest in all the world to him.

But there was no answer.

"Ah!" he murmured, "the dear girl does not hear her husband's voice," and he lay back in his easy chair and watched the blue flames dance in and out among the sparkling coals.

At such a time memory weaves cunning webs of softened colours and sweet designs, and the young husband's thoughts flew backwards and forwards in the loom of the past.

Three years ago he had been a mother's petted darling, with no wish ungratified, no comfort neglected, no luxury forgotten. Yet he felt within his heart a tender longing, an empty void, which so far in his happy life had remained unfilled. Mildred Ray came, and the mother's heart knew that the wife was greater than the mother.

A year passed, and Mildred was his wife. Gentle, loving, beautiful, he took her to their new home, and for two years she had filled his mother's place, and made his home a beautiful ideal, a four-walled paradise upon earth, yet far above it.

He was serenely happy and peacefully comfortable. Mildred had given him her thought, her energy, her time, her endeavour—and he was at rest.

He awoke from his reverie with a start.

"Mildred!" he called.

No answer.

He became alarmed. Was it, then, all a dream? And was he to be rudely awakened?

Alas, for the mutability of human affairs.

"Mildred!" he called for the fourth time.

"Yes, Henry," came the sweet-voiced answer from a sofa in the corner.

"Oh!" he said, in a tone of relief. "Are you there, darling?"

"Yes, hubbie mine."

"Well, love, the fire is going out; won't you go and fetch some more coal?"

"Not much, petsey! I've been doing the loving-wife slave business long enough, and if you want any more coal you'll have to get it yourself."

Mildred's memory had been weaving a few webs itself while that fire was slowly getting cold.

O. P. W.

"The Bond Between"

is the title of our New Serial Story which will commence the week after next—in *Short Stories* dated May 30th. It will be written by Blanche Eardley, the talented young authoress who is at present relating her stage experiences in *Pearson's Weekly*.

Remember the date - - MAY 30th.

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OUR SERIES.

Confessions of a Self-made Girl

The writer of these Confessions relates in this series of articles the true story of her life, from the time when she left Cornwall, an unsophisticated but ambitious girl, until she made her name and fortune. Her name is well known to you.

[*For the purposes of these Confessions I am calling myself Maud Cardew, as my real name is too well known for me to wish to make the story of my life public in this manner.*]

The Principals in the Story.

MAUD CARDEW.—The self-made girl.

HON. ROBERT LESTRANGE. (Commonly known as Bobbie.) } Men who had helped her to come to London and befriended her on her arrival.

REGINALD (DI) NORTHCOTE. }

I Meet with an Accident.

September 11th.

So I am to be a peeress after all.

We have been engaged just two weeks now, and everyone who knows has got over the first surprise. I begged there should be no fuss made, so we were very kindly left to ourselves, and permitted to remain still a secondary topic to the birds. People have been nicer about it than I thought they would be, but possibly as a prospective duchess, they think it policy to keep in my good books. Bah! How sceptical I am growing!

Thank Heaven! St. Aubyn has scarcely any relations. I should think there never was another duke so impoverished, or I might say so blest, in that respect.

There is a married sister, who has written me quite a passable letter—an old bachelor uncle who has sent a message—and a maiden aunt, who had an epileptic fit on hearing the news, and has been ill ever since.

St. Aubyn was quite pleased about the aunt. "I have owed her a grudge ever since she boxed my ears once as a boy," he said. "Now I think I have got my own back again," which was very horrid of him, and I told him so. But he only laughed and said, "Would you have me pretend I was sorry?"

I never knew anyone so absolutely indifferent to the world's opinion as he is. Sometimes I think it is because of his colossal faith in himself, and it irritates me.

I often wonder if Di has heard yet, and Bobbie? I wonder if any of us can ever be the same again, or anything like it? And if Di will mind at all? I know Bobbie will

I shall not need a banker any more I suppose, and I have a shrewd suspicion that Bobbie, for all his boyishness, will not be allowed to lounge any longer in my drawing-room at will. For I have discovered that St. Aubyn is decidedly masterful, and I think he would be jealous.

So far I have let him have his own way pretty well; but that is partly because I am still tired, and it is so much simpler to do as you are told. Before we get married I shall have to put my foot down over something, or I shall have no will left at all.

He was not very pleased yesterday when I was telling a girl about some of Bobbie's escapades, and what a dear, delightful, foolish boy he was. He said afterwards when one opened a new chapter in one's life quite unlike the rest, it was wiser to close the last and begin again as if it had not been.

I said nothing could ever make me change to my old friends, and he bit his moustache, in a funny little way he has when not pleased, and said it would of course have to be a question of "give and take."

I don't know what he meant, unless he has some girl pal he thinks I shall want him to give up. I certainly shall not, if she is anything like Bobbie was to me. I should think he was lucky ever to have had such a pal, and ought not to lose her at any price.

He has been very honest about his affairs, and I am glad, though he must have spent an unconscionable amount of money to get through all he has, since he came of age. But there, I have always known he was not a saint, and it is better to have one's eyes open.

September 13th.

A strange thing happened last night. I sit down to write about it feeling almost as if there were nothing else at all in Heaven or earth.

St. Aubyn and I were sitting on the terrace when he suddenly said—

"Do you know, from the first time I saw you and Di Northcote together, after I returned from abroad, I thought he was in love with you."

I felt my heart give a great bound, and I caught my breath with a little gasp.

"What an odd idea," I said, as he seemed to expect me to speak. "Why I remember you telling me he was just the kind of man who would never marry."

"Very likely, but it doesn't follow he would never fall in love."

I did not speak, and he went on.

"The first night I went to see you act I sat just behind

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Northcote in the stalls. He was at one side, rather in a corner, and he never took his eyes off your face."

Still I did not speak. Something like a terrible fear was dragging at my heart strings.

"I saw him three separate times," he continued, "and he was always the same—he never took his eyes off your face, and afterwards he went away directly without speaking to anyone. I remember once, too, hearing a fellow at the club make a bet that if Northcote were not such a confirmed old bachelor he would be head over ears in love with you."

"Well, he was quite wrong then," I said shortly. "Mr. Northcote has never shown me the slightest attention, except over business matters, with which he was pleased to amuse himself. Besides, he is practically engaged to Lady Danestone."

"Lady Danestone!" he echoed in surprise. "Whoever put such a tale as that about? Why she is engaged to General Lumley and has been for some little time, though it may not have been public. She is a sort of connection of mine, so I know it's true. The doctors won't let her go to him in India, so they are waiting until he comes home for good next Christmas, and then they will be married."

"Then why are they always together?" I asked, half-defiantly, with an odd bursting sensation about my head.

"Oh, Northcote has been hand in glove with her family for years and years. Her brother, who was killed in Egypt, and her husband, who died from a hunting accident, were his two greatest friends. They were known at one time as 'The Inseparables.'

"No," he continued, "I think Di liked you. I once said something about you purposely before him, to see how he would take it, and he went as black as thunder, and looked furious. I'm glad I've cut him out; he such a very superior being in his own estimation."

"I think we'll go in," I said, getting up rather hurriedly. "It has turned so chilly."

And all the way along I kept saying to myself:

"What if Di did love me after all? What if Di did love me?"

That was yesterday, but I am saying it still, and I seem to have been saying it ever since.

Shall I go on saying it all my life, I wonder? Will it lie like a cold hand across my happiness for ever?

September 20th.

How long it seems since I last wrote? How hopelessly hopeless everything seems to be getting? Two days after that last entry we went to a garden party at the neighbouring castle. And Di was there.

I saw him in the distance before he saw me, and suddenly everything seemed to reel and grow indistinct, and I clutched Mrs. Mateson's arm.

"What is the matter?" she asked anxiously, and I managed to stammer:

"It is nothing. I am only a little faint. Please don't say anything about it."

"All right," she answered. "We will take a turn down here," and I think she guessed I had had a shock of some sort, for she was just kind without asking any questions.

By the time Di came to shake hands with me I was quite collected again. It was well on in the afternoon, and St. Aubyn had left me to talk "big game" with another guest.

"So my duties are nearly at an end?" he said simply, taking an empty chair beside me.

He looked ill, I thought, and though his face was still the same impenetrable mask, there was something new in his eyes. In a certain suggestion of hopelessness they showed more feeling.

"You must be very glad," I said, scanning his face half-eagerly, in spite of myself.

"Why should I?" he asked. "It was my own wish all through."

"Yes, but I think you were prompted by a sense of duty towards a country mouse at large in town."

"No," he said, thoughtfully, "I don't think I was."

Then he fell to drawing a pattern on the gravel with his stick, and for some minutes neither of us spoke.

"Have you heard from Bobbie?" he asked at last.

I answered "Yes," and smiled faintly. For Bobbie had not been pleased to approve of the match, and after describing my *fiancé* as "that doll faced man with the skylight," had announced his intention of shooting him at the first opportunity.

"If I don't do it for you, you will do it yourself in three months," he had written, "and I should be much more entertaining on the scaffold than you."

Di seemed to gather some of this from my silence, and presently said:

"I suppose it really means 'Good-bye' for Bobbie and me?"

"Bobbie will perhaps mind a little?" I said half bitterly.

"And why not I?" he asked.

"You!" I cried, goaded suddenly to rashness. "Of course you will not mind! Why should you? When have you minded about anything for years? Hasn't it been your studied aim to teach yourself not to mind anything? To become a sort of polished statue instead of human flesh and blood?

"Do you think I have not known that you were pleased to show an interest in me because I happened to be a little out of the common? And that all the time, in reality, you had a sort of tolerant indulgence towards me as an actress, not good enough for a friend?"

I got up and walked to a low terrace wall, and leant my arms upon it, breathing heavily. Di did not speak for a long time, but when at last he came to me, there was a yet further change in his face, though I cannot describe it.

"I think you have accused me unjustifiably," he said. "Have you ever known me make a friend of any woman?"

"What of Lady Danestone?" I asked.

He seemed surprised.

"I have known Edith Danestone all my life," he said, "and I loved her husband as few men love each other. For years after his death she was inconsolable, and I was almost the only one she could bear to speak to about him. In consequence it drew us very near together. It is quite eighteen years ago now since he died, and she is engaged to be married to General Lumley, also a friend of mine, who is out in India. I might remind you," he added, "that sometimes when I have tried to be a friend you would not let me."

"Yes, I know!" I cried. "I could not bear your condescension. I felt you were sneering at me up your sleeve, all the time you were kindly directing my steps in the way they should go. I was a kind of automaton to you—all women are—that should run upon certain lines, and whom you could occasionally treat as possessing some intellect, and worthy of a passing consideration.

"Some of my worst exploits were the result of your veiled sneering. Sometimes you made me feel I could do anything to oppose you. You seemed to think any woman would be glad of your guidance. I wanted to show you that I did not care a fig for it, whatever the consequences. That you were always right in the end, only made me more sore."

He had grown very white while I talked, but I could not leave off—wrong or right I felt I must have it out with him, and he did not attempt to stop me.

"One of the first aims I conceived in London was that of making you feel," I ran on. "I believed you had a heart somewhere, and I made up my mind to try to get at it. I know that I have failed ignominiously, but I do not think anyone else will succeed. I do not think anything can touch you very much again."

"You are wrong," he said very quietly. "Far from failing, you have signally succeeded. During the last few weeks, through you, I have discovered that I have a power to feel equalled only by a power to suffer."

In the quiet of his voice, characteristic still of his complete mastery over himself, there was a note that left no room for doubt. I dare not look at his face—all at once I was conscious of a new hopelessness in it that stirred my soul to its inmost depths. I tried to speak, but my tongue refused

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to frame any words. In the hour of my longed-for triumph, I felt only humiliated and crushed.

"I hope you will be very happy," he said, in that same quiet way, "and since it means the end of our—our friendship, I should like to say, only you will not have it—our intercourse I will take this opportunity of saying I shall always feel indebted to you for showing me what you have about my own heart."

In a kind of daze, I saw St. Aubyn coming towards us, and then Di walked slowly away in the opposite direction. I tried to call him, but I seemed speechless, and I felt myself gripping the stone parapet in a kind of frenzy. If he had heard and come back I verily think I should have explained everything then, before the two of them.

But he did not hear—he did not hear. He went away out of my life, and perhaps I shall never see him again, to tell him I know I have wronged him.

October 20th.

This is the first time I have held a pen for a whole month, and now I am writing on a sofa, when I believe I am supposed to be sleeping quietly. Anyhow nurse has gone for a walk, and Mrs. Mateson has just crept out of the room and closed the door.

A good deal has happened since I last wrote, but of course the chief event is the one which laid me on my back a prisoner—I cannot even yet say for how long. It resulted partly over that incident of putting my foot down about something I once spoke of, and happened in this way.

The day after the garden-party St. Aubyn wanted to go into Glasgow, so he borrowed Colonel Mateson's motor, and prevailed upon me to drive with him.

We started off very early, just our two selves and a footman, in a beautiful little Panhard, and had a delightful run into Glasgow. It was a lovely day and St. Aubyn did not want to talk much, for which I was grateful for I was still feeling somewhat dazed over Di's revelation the previous day.

When we reached Glasgow St. Aubyn did his shopping, and we went to a hotel to lunch. Afterwards we stood in the entrance a few minutes waiting for the motor, and just then a girl I used to act with, and with whom I had been very friendly, came into the hotel with two men. She saw me at once, and hesitated as if to see whether I wished to acknowledge her. I did instantly, and said to St. Aubyn: "I know that girl well, I will go and speak to her."

He hurriedly studied the trio, and his mouth immediately assumed a scornful expression.

"You mean you used to know her," he said coldly.

"Not at all," I answered with spirit. "I was rather fond of her, and must just ask her about one or two of the old friends."

"Nonsense!" he exclaimed. "You cannot possibly be seen speaking to anyone in company with two men like that."

I admit the men were terrible, but I was angry at St. Aubyn's peremptory way of putting it, and saw a good opportunity of asserting my independence.

"It is not of the least consequence to me who sees me," I said airily. "I shall not keep you long."

"I object," he said angrily. "If you go it is against my express wishes."

For answer I crossed the hall and held out my hand to Ellen Grey.

After a little desultory conversation, in which the two men proved themselves the bounders they looked, I said good-bye again, and went back to St. Aubyn.

"Are there any other third-rate, low comedians you wish to converse with?" he asked scathingly, "before we start."

"Not unless we meet Bertha Grey on the road," I answered coolly, "her sister says she is in Glasgow. But I'll thank you not to insult my friends, St. Aubyn," I added.

"Oh, ask them all out to the Nest by all means, if you like," he snarled. "I'm sure Mateson would allow them to have tea in the servants' hall."

I hated Bertha Grey as much as I liked her sister, but seeing her cross the road at that moment, I went down the steps to meet her, and doubtless, as much to her surprise as anyone's, shook hands with her affably.

Then, without a word to St. Aubyn, I took my seat in the motor. He mounted beside me with a like silence, and we started homewards. I leant back and professed to be lost in admiration of the scenery, gazing about me with an air of the utmost unconcern.

St. Aubyn bit his moustache hard and put on the speed, until we must have got to thirty or forty miles an hour. When we came to corners, he shot round them with mad recklessness and took the hills in a break-neck fashion. The only time we broke the silence, was when after rounding a particularly nasty curve, I remarked: "I am sorry I have not made my will."

He did not reply, but continued the same speed.

So we flew on until it seemed to me the motor was a live thing, to which he had transmitted in some way his ill-temper. It was as though he was working it down into the motor, which in its turn became more reckless and unmanageable.

There is no denying it was exciting, in fact thrillingly so—I found myself presently holding tightly to the seat with my whole body strung to a tremendous pitch of wild, reckless enjoyment. I do not know what St. Aubyn felt, but I could see he had an iron grip upon the steering gear, and his eyes rigidly fixed on the road.

The climax came suddenly, when we were nearly home, and was due to a side-slip. Had the road not been greasy at that particular curve, we should doubtless have reached home in safety. As it was, the motor gave a terrific skid, and was flung full tilt against a bank.

The footman cleverly jumped over the bank, but it was a positive miracle St. Aubyn and I were not killed outright. As it was I knew no more until I came round in my own bedroom, and found Mrs. Mateson bending over me.

When I was sufficiently myself to speak, I asked about St. Aubyn. They told me he had a broken arm, and was rather badly cut and bruised, but had insisted on remaining near me until he had nearly fainted, and then the doctor had carried him off to bed. After that I do not remember anything much for a week.

I had a slight concussion of the brain, and had ricked my back badly. I know St. Aubyn almost lived in the room, and that he brought me lovely bouquets every morning, but I was too ill to do more than smile faintly when he spoke to me.

I remember, whenever I could think coherently at all, I thought I was dying, and I was glad. I suppose it was then that Nelly Mateson guessed my secret. Anyhow, I feel that she knows it now though nothing has been said between us.

But I did not die in spite of my wish, and now I am nearly all right again except for my back, which will not get well. St. Aubyn is goodness itself to me—he cannot do enough. I wish it were not so.

I am breaking my heart for Di. If only I had died—no one need have been hurt then. But now that St. Aubyn is waiting on me hand and foot, and has become more than ever wrapped up in me, how am I ever to tell him that I cannot marry him? I feel as if I should hate myself forever.

And when I have told him what am I to do? I feel I shall never see Di again at all, and so it seems as if I might just as well spare St. Aubyn the blow, and do all I can to make him happy. Only how can I marry him? How can I, when all the time I am breaking my heart for someone else?

(Next week I shall conclude my confessions.)

A SPLENDID SERIES

by Winifred Graham, whose work will be best known to readers of *Short Stories* by her serial "When the Birds Begin to Sing," which appeared some little time ago, will start next week. It will be quite a different style from any of the series which have recently been published. Order a copy of next week's *Short Stories* to be reserved for you.

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Complete in Twelve Lists.

BRAND NEW COMPETITION.

Cash Down. *Cash Down.* *Cash Down.*

1st Prize, £50. 2nd Prize, £25. 3rd Prize, £10.

And 25 Gramophones.

WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO.

Below will be found six paragraphs containing the buried names of Railway Stations in the United Kingdom (or words that sound the same as the names). You must write in the spaces given the names of the Railway Stations so indicated.

No word or part of a word may be used more than once in making up the name of a Railway Station. In the event of the name of a Railway Station occurring more than once in a sentence, it should be underlined and written down each time. In case of more than one person finding the same number of words for each or any sentence, those words containing the largest number of letters will have preference. No name of a Railway Station may be composed of a single letter, either standing by itself or taken from any word in the sentences.

When you have discovered the names of Railway Stations in the sentences, underline (in ink) the words which go to make up the names (or words that sound the same as the names) and then on the line underneath each sentence write (in ink) the correct names of the Railway Stations to be found in each.

All the names will be found in the Index to Railway Stations in the January edition of Bradshaw's Guide. Should you be unable to obtain a copy of this Guide, a reprint of the Index will be sent to you for three penny stamps on application to *Bradshaw's Guide*, 59 Fleet Street, London, E.C.; or Room Eight, SHORT STORIES, 17 and 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

The names of the Railway Stations consist of one word or two or more consecutive words, or consecutive parts of one word, or two or more consecutive words.

The first prize of £50 will be given to the Competitor who fills in the greatest number of railway stations under the conditions stated. The second prize of £25 will go to the person who fills in the next greatest number, and the other prizes will be awarded in the order of merit.

When you have filled in all the names you can find, cut out the list below and keep it by you. Don't on any account send it to us until the closing date is announced in SHORT STORIES. The ninth list of sentences will appear next week.

In the event of a tie a further list (or, if necessary, several further lists) of sentences will be submitted to the tieing competitors until one wins the first prize outright.

CUT THROUGH HERE

EXAMPLE.

The oaks were swaying in the breeze, the cows were grazing peacefully, when out of the park tore a huge black bull.

The Oaks, Sway, Cowes, Grays, Park, Black Bull.

EIGHTH LIST.

43. We have eaten that Indian curry you bought in a side street near Kentish Town; we wished there had been a little more of it.

44. He suffered from ingrowing toenails, even though Merton, who cured similar cases, had spent a lot of time treating him.

45. The supports of the new bridge were splendid to rest on, until someone leant on them too hard, when they gave way.

46. During a fit of frenzy she said: "If I had a mother, be sure that she would end my pain to-night, instead of prolonging it as you do."

47. I heard you were thinking of selling the cattle you bought in Turner's sale: Are you willing to name a price for them?

48. It was very late on Friday when the last train reached London Bridge. An accident on the line had caused the delay.

NAME..... ADDRESS.....

.....

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Love's Awakening.

The Story of an Artist's Model.

"And so, Lottie, you are looking for the last time upon 'Thoughts,' for to-morrow it goes to its new owner."

"I *am* glad you have sold it," said the girl, "but I shall miss it, sir; it has grown to be like a friend to me."

"Which I hope it is," said the handsome young painter, smiling; "for it is your very self, when you are deep in thought; ah, Lottie, it was an unfortunate day for Claude Leclerc, when first he saw your face in the Strand."

"Taking out papers for mother," said the girl musingly. "I remember it so well. Mr. Leclerc, I *did* wonder, when first you spoke, why you could want me for a model; for I had never thought that I was such as you said—beautiful."

"You had never consulted your mirror then, Lottie, or those eyes of yours are not so perfect in sight, as in beauty."

The girl smiled, a rather sad smile, but free from all vanity or self-consciousness; she was accustomed by now to hear the artist praise her beauty."

"I never had overmuch time to look at my face, true, sir," she answered, "for since father died, mother has had to work very hard in her little shop and needed all my help, but things are better of late—good-night, sir—good-bye dear 'Thoughts,' I shall not see *you* to-morrow."

"Not unless you come very early in the morning, which is unnecessary, for you may in your mirror see its counterpart at any time."

As he spoke Claude Leclerc threw himself into the one dilapidated armchair the studio contained, and with his chin resting on his hand, intently and thoughtfully, regarded the model and the picture.

To describe one were to describe both, so lifelike was the picture, a face of rare beauty, such as an artist loves; eyes, deeply, richly blue, with changing tinges of grey in their depths; a mouth of much sweetness; a fair, rounded chin; and hair, with sunny rays, intermixed with its brown wealth; skin of rich, creamy texture, tinged with a delicate colour, that would come and go unbidden; it was a sweet, sensitive, thoughtful face.

"I think I named my picture rightly; do you not think so, Lottie?" said the artist at length; "for the face is full of thoughts; do you know that I am sometimes curious as to the nature of those thoughts; is there not a lover somewhere in the background colouring them?"

He sometimes jested thus, that he might watch the changes in her face, and so gain ideas as to how he should next paint her.

"No, indeed!" and she laughed a merry little laugh; "no, indeed, sir—good afternoon!"

"Good afternoon, child, and you will come to-morrow—for to-morrow—" and he rose and followed her to the door—"we begin our next picture—the picture which is to bring me wealth and fame."

His voice had sunk to a murmur, so that she did not hear his last words, so she merely asked:

"And what are you going to call it—this new picture, sir?"

"I cannot tell you what the subject is to be," he said as though aroused from a reverie; "I may not name it until it is finished—but—it is still something in the thought line—only—the thoughts must be concentrated on one object or subject; but we will see. Good-night, child, good-night!"

He spoke dreamily, he was thinking of his picture, and another face that was not that of his model.

"Good-night, sir," said the girl, with a perplexed air; "I will come early to-morrow."

The sound of her footsteps had long died away ere Claude Leclerc rose, and, standing before the picture, looked at it long and critically; then he walked thoughtfully up and down the studio, pausing now and then to look at the still uncovered picture.

"She is evidently perfectly heart-whole," he spoke at last, aloud, in one of his pauses before the picture. "Ah, could I but bring that look into her face, which is now lacking, it would mean the realisation of all my hopes!

"Yes, it would be grand, that heart of hers, roused to life and transforming her face, would radiate the canvas, and—the world would be at my feet, then—Rome—Italy—and Irene."

His voice lingered—tenderly, caressingly, on the last name, as though loth to let it leave his lips; his step up and down the room quickened; then he paused and covered the picture gently and caressingly, as though it lived.

As it disappeared from his view he spoke again, and in his eyes was a light of determination and resolve.

"I will do it." The words left his lips slowly. "I will do it—the task will be easy—it will not harm her—she is very young—she will forget."

* * * * *

"Turn your head a little more this way, little one—ah, that is perfect—now the arm."

Claud Leclerc touched his model lightly as he spoke, touched her as though to rearrange her hair, her pose; but, in those light, indefinable touches, the girl felt the shadow of a caress, for of late his speaking eyes seemed to love to linger on her face, and his voice when addressing her was ever soft and low.

"You are looking too thoughtful, little one," he continued softly. "Ah, those thoughts, those thoughts—look this way for a second; yes, that is better—but I tire you?"

"No," she answered, the soft colour stealing to her cheek, "I never tire; I so love to see the picture grow."

She felt his breath on her cheek as he touched her hair, his hand lay lightly on hers, and he withdrew its touch from her fingers, slowly, lingeringly, as though reluctant to do so; he stooped closer to the canvas and his hair touched her forehead. Oh, the sweetness of it all! Her heart was waking to life.

And this waking had been going on for days now; for the

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artist had found his task more difficult than he had anticipated, the picture was near its completion, save for a few touches that would make or mar it, that were needed to give it life.

Never had days been so fair as this, to the never-weary model; she lived in another world—a world of perfect bliss and beauty.

Her happiness was apparent in her face; she daily grew more beautiful; for every morning was the beginning of a new day of happiness, so that upon waking she would sometimes cry out, "I am glad, so glad that it is morning, and I shall see his face again."

For her heart, slow to love, but tenacious in its affections, was turning slowly but surely to the artist; she felt that he loved her; and, like an opening bud, the petals of her soul were expanding, showing forth in her face new beauties, such as one sees in the opening rose.

She had always had a strong liking for him; he was handsome and polished, and the first of his class with whom she had come into contact.

Moreover, he had ever treated her with courtesy, yet none of these things, although winning her regard and liking, would of themselves have won her love; for hers was not a nature to give its love unsought.

Besides, she had too modest an opinion of herself, and too much good sense, not usually found in people of her station, to mistake superficial flattery and attention for love.

But of late the thought would recur, although she had put it away again and again; the belief that the artist loved her: his every look and action showed it so plainly, and love for him was overwhelming her with a force that Claud Leclerc could never have realised, for, had he been able to comprehend how love could sound the depths and change the current of life, in a heart like Lottie's, he would have paused, aye, and paused long ere tampering with such a nature.

"I seem to have done but little to-day, Lottie," he exclaimed, after he had arranged her to his liking, "I cannot get the expression——"

"Oh, I wish, I do wish, I could look just as you would have me," she answered earnestly; "yet to me the picture is now beautiful enough."

"Ah, Lottie *mia*," he said tenderly, "were your wishes my charioteers, I know that ere this I should have reached the goal of fortune."

As he spoke their eyes met and the girl's fell before the look in those of the artist; she felt the warm flush steal over her face and neck, then it receded, leaving her pale and trembling.

She would not meet his eyes again, she dared not, he saw, and impatiently threw down his brush.

"My hand fails me somehow, these last days," he said, throwing himself into a chair and drawing her to him. "Come, let us talk instead of what I shall do should this picture bring me wealth.

"I shall go to Rome and Italy; I shall see and study the works of the great masters, and on my return we shall take what the gods have sent us—happiness—love and joy."

His voice became low and dreamy, his eyes shone as he pictured in his mind a face; a face as fair as Lottie's, aye, more regally, royally beautiful—the one face in the world for him.

The dream passed and his eyes dwelt once again on the still unfinished picture.

"Lottie, my beautiful Lottie!" He bent forward and sought her eyes; "shall we not be happy—say, little girl, for I love you, Claud loves you."

She trembled with joy and fear, the rose she held in her hand fell to the ground. Claud leant forward to regain it, then, drawing her gently to his side, he placed it in the bodice of her gown; then he drew her closer into the fold of his arms.

Raising her face to his with a tender smile, he looked into it until he had compelled her sweet, shy eyes to meet his.

She had thought to veil her heart beneath those long lashes; for the eyes beneath told him all; in them he saw the look he waited for—love, shy wonder, rapture and ecstasy—the girl's heart was awake to life and love.

With trembling haste Claud Leclerc rose, seized his brush, and touched the picture swiftly and lightly; all was forgotten—love, ambition, even the little model at whom he glanced occasionally with the eye of an artist—all but those last touches.

At length he paused, threw down his brush—triumph, elation, and other feelings, at war in his face, for the picture was finished.

* * * * *

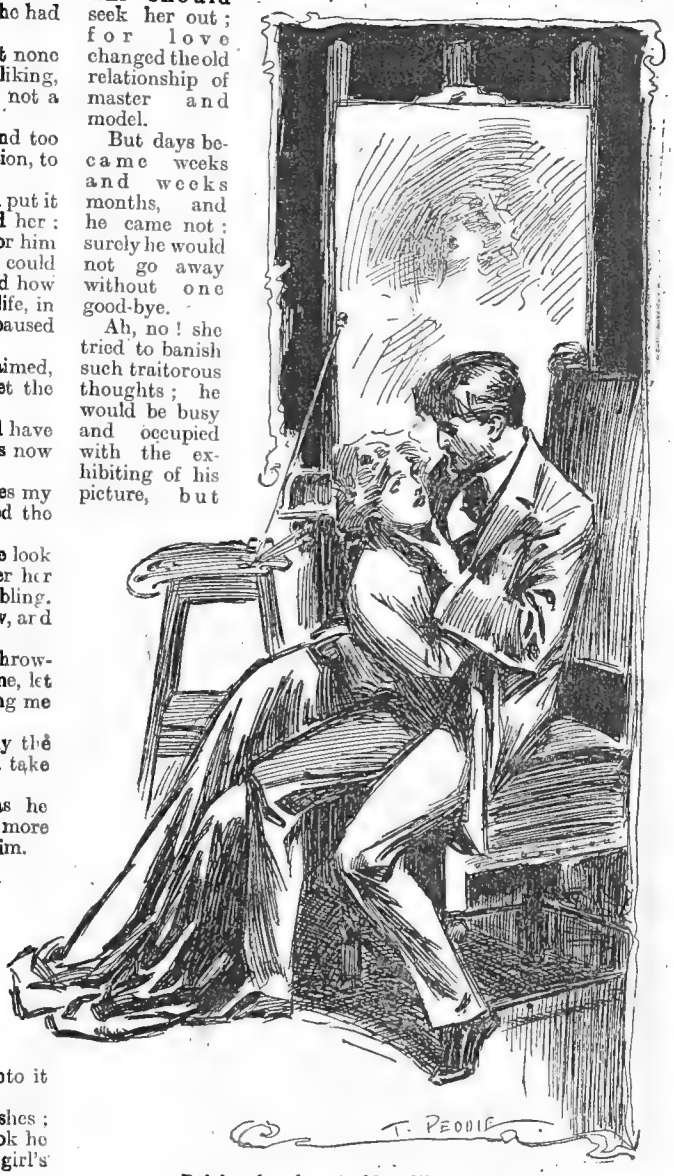
Three months had passed away, and whilst all London was talking of the picture of the season, a girl's heart was silently breaking with longing and waiting, and waiting in vain.

Lottie had not seen the artist since the eventful day of the picture's completion; she would not seek him at his studio, for he had said he would write or see her ere he went to Rome.

Besides this, a shyness had come to her, and a feeling of pride; he had told her of his love, then, she argued, it was he who should seek her out; for love changed the old relationship of master and model.

But days became weeks and weeks months, and he came not: surely he would not go away without one good-bye.

Ah, no! she tried to banish such traitorous thoughts; he would be busy and occupied with the exhibiting of his picture, but



Raising her face to his with a tender smile he looked into it.

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one day he would come and she would meet him as her lover.

But as time went on, hope became doubt, and doubt deepened into a grim certainty; and the heart of the girl grew sadder and heavier as the empty days passed, until upon it settled an oppressive weight that would not remove.

"He has gone," she would whisper sadly to the now faded brown rose, her one treasure; "he has forgotten me so soon, can he have loved me as he said and have left me like this?"

Then bitter tears would fall on the rose, tears that would almost have awakened the heart of any dead thing, and then she would brush them away and call herself silly and foolish for her mistrust of him, and, kissing the brown petals of the dead rose, she would try to smile again.

One keen, cold day in December she arose, and the load that oppressed her seemed heavier than usual; and suddenly a sore longing came upon her to see the picture once more. Claud had once said it would be hung at the Royal Academy; she would find it, wherever it was.

She gained her mother's permission who, poor soul, was sorely at a loss to know what had so changed her of late, and, drawing her thin black cape around her frail form, Lottie set off to the Academy.

Her heart throbbed with tumultuous feeling, as she peered into every room, then she saw it—saw it in the distance in a prominent place.

It seemed to her that most of the people who were there that day stood around it; and as she took a place in the background she caught faint words of approval and praise of its beauty.

How beautiful it was, and how much joy and sorrow it had caused her; she stood long before it as if spell-bound, hearing as in a dream the remarks of the passers-by.

She could almost smell the perfume of the rose as he had placed it in her bosom, she could feel his kiss on her cheek, and see his handsome, impassioned eyes looking into hers.

Some turned to look at the slight, attenuated form, but they did not recognise her as the original of the picture, for the bloom had left the cheek, now so drawn and thin.

She wondered how she could ever have looked so radiantly beautiful as the picture portrayed her; that her eyes could ever have looked so glad, her breast with its weight of heavy hopelessness could scarce believe.

These and more were her thoughts, interrupted by a voice which floated to her ears—she would have heard it even had she slept, so familiar it was; yea, and so dear.

"True, it is a charming face, Irene"—the voice softened at that name—"but it is a beauty that will soon take to itself wings, for she will marry, which among her class means work, care, drudgery——"

She heard no more, but that sufficed—that and the airy lightness of the tone; her heart became a stone.

She turned and saw him; upon his arm leant a lady of matchless beauty. Lottie saw the proud pose of the neck and head, she saw also the look, fond and worshipping, with which Claud Leclerc regarded his companion.

"Why, Lottie, you here!" he said, quickly recovering from his momentary confusion.

Something took possession and gripped her heart, something that impelled her to touch Leclerc's arm; he turned, and met a face flushed as with hectic, and eyes wildly bright.

"Why, Lottie, you here!" he said, recovering quickly from his momentary confusion and turning with his old charm of manner to his companion. "Lady Irene, Lottie, my little model; but you will know her well by now from my pictures."

"But surely"—the lady's voice was low and sweet—"surely she is changed, Claud? How thin, how ill——"

"Yes," he interrupted carelessly, "I believe she is thinner; gone off too!"

Lady Irene had been holding out her hand, but Lottie did not take it—she was powerless; she saw the sweet smile, the gold bronze of the hair, the violet eyes; she to be compared with this grace and beauty!

"I thought you had gone away, sir," Lottie managed to say at last, and her voice sounded husky and strange, even in her own ears. "As you did not write as you promised I——"

"No, I have had a very busy time," he answered, breaking in quickly ere she had finished speaking; "fame brings plenty of work and worry in its train. I go next week."

"And so he came to look once again ere his departure on 'Love's Awakening,' which would never have had an existence but for you, Lottie; but have you not been ill of late—you are much thinner than in the picture?"

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It was Lady Irene who spoke ; her voice, low rich and full of sweet sympathy fell on Lottie's ears unheeded.

"Love's Awakening!" a sudden pain shot to her breast ; she put her hand there and turned dazed, unseeing eyes to the artist's face.

"Is that—is that its name?" she faltered.

He looked at her keenly, feeling slightly uneasy, a feeling strange to him. Did she guess—was it a challenge that shone in her fine eyes? Well, she must be disillusioned sometime, better at once ; but Irene must not know.

He held out his hand as these thoughts flashed through his mind, and his voice deliberately assumed a tone of regard.

"Lottie, in my absence, you must take care of yourself," he said gently, "for on my return I shall need you again, but now—good-bye, we are late."

"And whilst Claud is away may I come and see you?" said the lady kindly ; "for when he returns, we are to be married in early Spring——"

The happy laugh on her lips was stayed, changing to sudden sadness, for the girl's lips moved ; and when she found her voice it was a voice as of one in pain and anguish.

"No, you must never see me again ; you must not come," her tone was low and intense, "for I cannot bear it—I cannot!"

Her voice broke suddenly, she drew a handkerchief weakly from her breast and held it to her lips—it was stained with crimson ; then she threw up her arms and would have fallen, but Lady Irene caught her and held her close to her breast, saying quickly and decisively :

"Claud, a doctor, and my carriage, quick—I will take her home."

"Yes, home," Lottie whispered, "home ; I am so tired—so tired!"

The perfume of Lady Irene's roses stole over her senses, she saw the kind, angel-eyes filled with pity and love shining above her ; to her desolate heart they gave comfort and a sense of security, and then she seemed to fall asleep.

But once or twice her lips moved tremulously, and, Lady Irene, stooping forward eagerly, heard the whispered words : "Love's awakening!" "Love's awakening!"

* * * * *

It was a glorious February day, a day that gave promise of a glorious Springtime. Claud Leclerc was seated at breakfast in a luxuriously furnished room in a pretty Roman villa.

The hour was late, but he had only just risen ; several unopened letters were before him ; he chose one that caused him to tremble with impatience as he broke the seal.

"At last!" he said aloud. "Irene, my darling, how I have longed and waited for this! Surely she has not been ill."

His eyes scanned it eagerly, the well-loved writing ; then his face paled, his lips trembled, and he fell forward, covering his eyes with his hands—fell forward with a heavy groan. For this is what he read :

"*I have just returned from laying flowers—pure and sweet as herself—on the dead form of Lottie—Lottie, an artist's model.*

"*You broke a true heart that you might win wealth and fame ; these are things which may be bought with the price of blood, but not so the love of Irene Vercourt. I pray God that I may never look upon your face again!*"

Besy.

"Did she thank you for the seat?" "No ; but after she had settled down in it she smiled sweetly, and begged me not to rise."

"Here, what does this mean?" shouted Whooply, as he found his youngest riding a broomstick over the top of the piano. "It's all right. Mamma said if I'd stay in I could play on the piano."

"Darling," said she, "do you love me as much as ever?" "Yes, dearie," said he, with his nose buried in his newspaper. That ought to have satisfied her, but she had to ask : "Why?" "Oh. I dunno. Habit, I s'pose."

Your Editor Chats.

On page 623 appears the eighth list of sentences in connection with the Competition, which will be complete in twelve lists. Below are some fresh points raised by readers, together with my replies to them.

Question : May the letters in any of the words be transposed so as to form the name of a station?

Answer : It is distinctly stated in the conditions of the competition that the words or parts of words must be taken consecutively, in order to form the names.

Question : May I make the name "Heath" out of the last four letters in the word "beneath" should that word occur in any of the sentences?

Answer : Certainly not. The four letters you mention form only "Eath," there is no "H" with which to commence "Heath."

Question : May I copy the sentences out on to a piece of foolscap paper and then write the names of the stations underneath each sentence on the foolscap, instead of in Short Stories? When sending in my complete list of sentences I would, of course, inclose the pages from Short Stories.

Answer : All names of stations must be written legibly on the line given for that purpose under each sentence in Short Stories.

Back numbers containing the first seven lists can be obtained through your newsagent, or, if stamps for tenpence are sent to the Publisher, Short Stories, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, W.C., they will be sent direct, post free.

Next week will see the conclusion of the "Confessions of a Self-made Girl." In that number a series by Miss Winifred Graham will commence. This series will consist of stories told by friends to each other during journeys in the train on different occasions. Each story will be complete in itself.

In Short Stories dated May 30th, on sale the week after next, will appear the opening chapters of a new serial, the plot of which is an entirely novel one, and it will be worked out in a way quite fresh to readers of Short Stories. This story will be written by Blanche Eardley, the clever writer who is at present relating her life history in *Pearson's Weekly* in a series of articles entitled "Tinsel Triumphs." You should tell your friends of both this series and the new serial to start the week after next, they cannot fail to be interested.

I am glad to be able to announce that the Fresh Air Fund is beginning to swell in a most satisfactory manner, and if it continues in the way in which it has started it cannot but have a successful season. Just because it has started so well without your help, don't think that there is no need for you to send along a donation. It is needed just as much as ever, for the more money we receive, the greater the number of children who will be able to have a day's outing.

It is really astonishing the number of children there are in our big cities—a very large sum of money would be required to enable them all to go away just for one day.

If, however, each person who saw the notices regarding the Fresh Air Fund were to send only ninepence, it would mean a big increase in the number of happy little ones. Send your contribution, and ask your friends to send something as well—the sooner the better—to the Hon. Secretary, Fresh Air Fund, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C. Collecting forms can be had on application. All amounts received will be acknowledged in *Pearson's Weekly*.

Your Editor.

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The Interference of Selina Smith.

Telling of a Postcard and a Jealous Wife.

MILLY CORTON was not in the habit of opening her husband's letters, but that custom of privacy was naturally inapplicable to postcards. They had only been married five months, and were still on the heights of romance, when the midday post brought an innocent-looking card.

Milly took it herself from the postman, giving him in return a cheery good-morning. "George Corton, Esq.," and the address were inscribed on the front. She turned it over. This was what her amazed eyes read on the back :

"98 *Lonsdale Road,*
"*Plynton.*

"DEAR GEORGE,—*When are you coming to see me? I got to this place last week, and hope to be found here for a good while. Do walk round one evening and take me out! I know we shall have a happy time together, and I could probably tell you a few things that you aren't aware of.—Yours ever,*
"SELINA SMITH."

For the moment Milly was literally stunned. She sat down in a dazed condition on the hall-chair. A thunderbolt had fallen from the blue ; the sky was suddenly black with clouds.

Who was this Selina Smith who dared to write to her husband in such a familiar strain ? What dreadful secret in his past life had come by chance to-day into her possession ? Five months of undimmed happiness, and now a terrible mystery that put an end to everything !

Milly read the card over and over again, till every word was photographed on her mind. It seemed to have been dashed off in a hurry, but the handwriting was not uneducated. Milly was sure that she had never seen it before.

Presently she arrived at the one possible solution of the affair. Some old, unknown admirer of George's had come to reside in Plynton, and wanted to meet him on the same footing as in his pre-nuptial days. How awful to think that such a wicked creature could even exist !

Whatever George had been before marriage—and such a very good-looking man could not help being a bit of a flirt perhaps—he was goodness personified now, never looking twice at any woman except his wife. This Selina Smith—whoever she might be—must be sent about her business.

Although profoundly assured of George's rectitude, Milly felt very miserable—so much so that after lunch she indulged in a good cry.

Her feelings thus relieved, she began to think out the plan of operations. No general tackling an unknown enemy in an unknown country could have given the matter graver consideration.

Should she let the postcard fall into George's hands or not ?

She decided that she would, and in this wise. He always went to the letter-box for the early morning delivery. The last thing to-night she would slip that fatal postcard inside, so that he might take it out with the other letters in the morning.

Thus no suspicion could occur to him that she had sighted the incriminating document. It was her unpleasant but clear duty to put her husband to the test, convinced though she was that he would emerge therefrom with flying colours.

When Milly came down next morning he first glance was towards the breakfast-table, at which George was seated eating his porridge, the newspaper erected in front of him.

There appeared to be no letters at all, and the post-card was conspicuous by its absence. George must have pocketed it. She watched from behind the tea-pot for a sign of guilt, but his appetite was as good as ever.

"I say, Milly, you look rather pale this morning."

"I didn't sleep very well."

"Something disagreed with you perhaps ? "

She nodded. Something had disagreed and was likely to disagree, until the mystery was cleared up.

As she handed him his carefully brushed hat, he remarked :

"I shall be home a little later to-night, Milly."

A dread fear clutched her heart and showed in her face.

"Don't look so woebegone about it, dear ! Only a very little later than usual ! "

She affected playfulness, though goodness knew her spirits were despondent enough.

"Oh, George ! Going off on a little spree that you won't tell your wifey about ? "

"No ! Don't be too curious ! You'll know some time."

"Won't you tell me now ? In what direction is it, I wonder ? "

"Well, I'll tell you this. I've a call to make in the Lonsdale Road. There, don't ask me anything else. Good-bye, dear ! " And he kissed her and was gone.

It was true then—terribly true. Milly staggered back into the dining-room. That adventuress had cast her spell about him ; he was going off to the address named on the post-card. Yes, the husband she once trusted had proved himself to be an arch-deceiver.

In a very short time Milly came to a decision. Her first act was to consult a Plynton directory. Feverishly she turned over the pages to ascertain who lived at 98 Lonsdale Road. Numbers 98 to 106 were occupied by Wheeler's, the biggest emporium in the town, employing over a hundred assistants. Selina Smith must be a shop-girl !

At this discovery Milly's tears broke out afresh. A person of high degree would not have mattered so much, but that a common shop girl should have had the effrontery to approach her own darling George—oh, the infamy of the thing was increased tenfold !

Half-an-hour after luncheon Milly went upstairs and put on her things—her best things. She intended to seek out Selina Smith at Wheeler's, and make an impression upon that young person which she would not speedily forget. Instant dismissal, if not something worse, would be her punishment.

All the principal shops in Plynton were situated in the Lonsdale Road. At the further end stood Wheeler's. It was an establishment that provided one with nearly everything from patent baby foods to coffins.

You could match any shade of wool there, and you could buy the best Stilton cheese in the town.

Not only could Wheeler furnish your house from attic to

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cellar, but he could clothe your body from head to foot, whilst an excellent circulating library catered for the good of your mind. "Put yourself in Wheeler's hands" was a favourite maxim of Plynton's inhabitants.

For a few minutes Milly hung about the windows. She was not, however, peering at bonnets or studying shades of cretonnes, though she appeared to be. In reality she was rehearsing her part and mastering her nerves. Presently with some trepidation she went in.

An obsequious shop-walker glided forward.

"What can I show you, madam?"

"Er—nothing just at present, thanks! I wanted to see—— Have you a Miss Smith here?"

"Smith! Yes! In the silk department. You want to speak to her?"

"If you please!"

"Step this way."

Milly followed him upstairs and along a corridor, her courage oozing away with every step. Should she make some trivial purchase and withdraw? But duty was paramount. The man stopped at a counter.

"Miss Smith, forward!"

No one appeared. He called again. With a "Yes, sir!" a girl came running up.

"This lady wants to see you, Miss Smith," and the shop-walker withdrew—to a discreet distance.

Taking stock of the young person who had sought to impress her husband by her fascinations, Milly experienced a considerable shock. Where—oh, where—was George's taste? A raw, large-boned, country miss in an ill-fitting black dress, and without one decent feature in her face.

George had always said that good looks in a woman were a necessity (Milly knew that she herself had strong claims to prettiness.) In what could possibly consist the attractiveness of the girl before her?

Milly gradually awoke to the fact that she was expected to speak, but her rising anger made it difficult.

"What can I get you, madam?"

"Nothing, thanks. You are Miss Smith?"

"Yes."

"I wanted a word with you privately. Oh, how could you do such a thing?"

Miss Smith opened her eyes. Had she palmed off some indifferent material at the recent sale to this now better-informed customer?"

"I'm afraid, madam, I don't understand."

"You soon will, then. You know my husband, Miss Smith?"

"If you would kindly tell me what your name is I might answer your question."

"My name is—Corton."

"Corton! I don't know anyone of that name."

This apparent innocence was disgraceful. Milly felt herself swept away by a tide of moral indignation.

"Oh, you wicked girl! You are now adding lying to your other sins. But you'd better throw up the sponge. I know all about it."

The girl's mouth—and such a plain one too—was wide open with astonishment.

"You've been writing to my husband," continued Milly, "and asking him to take you out. Where did you meet him first I want to know? Why have you come to Plynton to break up our happy home? What are the horrible lies you want to tell him about me? You're a bad woman. I shall get Mr. Wheeler to send you away."

Miss Smith's cheeks were red with surprise, indignation, fear. This woman must be mad. A lunatic asylum was situated on the confines of Plynton, and evidently one of its inmates had escaped.

Fixing her eyes on Milly—Miss Smith knew by tradition that this was the wisest course to adopt with mad people—she called loudly: "Mr. Wood! Mr. Wood!"

The shopwalker appeared. His first glance at the two faces told him that a storm was raging, but he always had a plentiful supply of oil to pour on troubled waters.

"Perhaps you will explain to this gentleman, madam," said Miss Smith, signalling something to the shopwalker which he could not understand.

Milly repeated her charge as coherently as her temper would allow. The man looked her through and through. He too had doubts of this lady's sanity.

"There must be some mistake, madam. The morals of the young ladies we employ are quite above——"

"But I tell you she has written to my husband. I've seen the card."

"Signed, madam?"

"Certainly! Selina Smith, as bold as brass!"

"My name is Violet, and it's my only one," observed Miss Smith.

"Did you say Selina Smith, madam?" inquired the shop-walker.

"I did. Isn't this she?"

Mr. Wood's next action was so unworthy of the honourable position that he held that one hardly likes to mention it. He smiled so broadly that the smile could not be hidden by the big pocket-handkerchief of which he hurriedly made use. He took it away to speak, but exploded again.

Milly—the picture of virtuous wrath—looked from one to the other.

"I asked you a question, sir."

"Pardon me. It is so funny. There's no such person as Selina Smith."

"No such person?"

"Not outside the pages of a book." He searched among some papers in his pocket. "Doubtless your husband had a postcard exactly like that, madam?"

He was holding out an exact duplicate of the card that George had received. Milly nodded.

"It's a publisher's clever but rather unscrupulous dodge to advertise a new novel called 'The Interference of Selina Smith.' These postcards have been sent, I find, to a good many people in Plynton, but, needless to say, without our co-operation. Perhaps you didn't observe that yours was lithographed?"

"I didn't. It was stupid of me." Milly turned to the girl. "I ask your pardon, Miss Smith."

"Oh, it's granted."

The shopwalker's dignity had returned.

"If you'll step downstairs, madam, to the book department I'll show you a copy of the novel. You might like to buy it as a curiosity."

* * * * *

George Corton arrived home only twenty minutes later than usual that evening.

"There, Milly, that's the reason I'm late."

She opened eagerly the small case which he thrust into her hand.

"A silver manicure set—the very thing I wanted! Oh, George, how good of you!"

"Not at all! I just thought it might look better on your dressing-table than in Wheeler's window."

Milly could not suppress a smile. So he had been there after all.

"I was in their shop this afternoon and bought a book for you, George. Do you know it at all? It's called 'The Interference of Selina Smith.'"

"That's the humorous novel the publishers are trying to advertise by a new dodge. I got a postcard about it this morning. Didn't I show it you?"

"No, George!"

He produced the card. She read it through, and turned it over, as though it were something fresh to her.

"Imagine," he said, "a jealous wife waylaying a document like that! I thought of trying you by way of a joke, Milly, but I knew it wouldn't work. You are far too sensible."

"Perhaps I'm not all you think me, George."

"Nonsense! You trust me too completely ever to have feelings of jealousy, don't you, dear?"

And Milly, the hypocrite, could only turn up her face for a kiss

Herbert Jamieson.

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OUR SERIAL.

Held Apart

The Story of a Strange Double Fraud and its Influence upon some Young Hearts, a Great Name, and a Famous Fortune.

By R. NORMAN SILVER.

Author of "The Golden Dwarf," "A Daughter of Mystery," etc.

SOME INTERESTING PEOPLE.

John Davenal. A diver.
Hannah Davenal. His sister, maid to Lady Tarleton.
Moira. Supposed to be the diver's daughter.
Sir Guy Vanbrugh. Moira's lover.
Adeline, Lady Tarleton. His aunt.
Irene Tarleton. Her daughter.
Edward Stormont. Lady Tarleton's brother-in-law.
Paul Jerome. His friend, a war-correspondent and journalist, in love with Irene.
Dennis Hartigan. A ship's steward, and husband of Hannah.
"Kit" Hartigan. His sister, a blind girl.
Detective-Sergt. Ussher. Of Scotland Yard.

TWENTY-SIXTH CHAPTER.

"That Name was Moira."

Moira bent her gaze upon the distant barque. To her experienced eye—the eye of one accustomed to the sea and shipping from childhood—the nearness of the vessel's departure was apparent. Laden to her shapely water-line, all taut and well-found alow and aloft, a crack modern vessel on the eve of departure is like a pretty woman lingering before her glass while her maid stands ready to open the door. Her delay may seem long, but it is almost to be counted by seconds, and then she has stepped forth out of her chamber, her toilet a thing of the past.

Although Moira did not stop to make so poetical a comparison, she felt to the full the importance of the little while that remained before the barque should weigh anchor and carry off among her crew—perhaps to death in some far quarter of the globe—the man who, according to Dennis Hartigan, knew the secret of her birth and identity.

The ex-steward studied his companion acutely. Then he shielded his eyes with his hollowed palm

"They're manning the capstan," he said; "no, only fitting the bars. But she'll be off inside the half-hour."

Moira glanced back into the house—the skilful stimulus he had given to her anxiety decided her.

"I—I must speak to nurse about going out," she answered, "and put on my hat. I won't be a minute." And, a strange excitement blotting out her instinctive dislike of the ex-steward, all remembrance of the questions that, but an instant earlier, had been springing to her lips, she darted upstairs with feverish speed.

Dennis Hartigan looked after her and his face set in a sinister mask. He opened his blue serge jacket and dived into an inner pocket, to produce a small flask of spirits, and put it to his mouth.

The fluid was neat, yet he gulped half of the bottle's contents. He had scarcely returned it to his pocket when Moira came downstairs, cloaked and hatted.

The ex-steward went before her to the garden gate, drew it wide, and they passed out together.

"We can borrow a boat from any of these landings," he said, and strode across the quay, to descend to the level of the water.

Slipping the painter of a light gig, he sprang in and took the oars. Moira sat down in the stern-sheets and adjusted the rudder-lines over her shoulders.

"I expect the skipper will be a bit puzzled," remarked the ex-steward, "but we can put him off somehow. And if a sovereign or two should be necessary to grease our man's tongue, well, I'm not so hard up that I can't manage it."

"Thank you," said Moira, as they shot out of the harbour; "it is very kind of you to take so much trouble. I'm sure I don't——"

Dennis Hartigan laughed.

"Don't know why I should," he completed; "well, I'm not certain myself. But I owe John Davenal a good turn and it seems he's been bothering himself about you having no real relations. I expect he's been set thinking about it by the narrow escape he's had of leaving you alone in the world."

"I'm—I'm not sure that I want any relations," answered Moira, bringing the gig deftly round the breakwater as Dennis Hartigan swept it forward with long strokes, "but

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I should like to know who I am, and what my real name is."

"Quite so," retorted the ex-steward; "so would any girl of spirit. Well, we'll do our best to get a pointer on the subject now."

He rowed fast and skilfully and the gig breasted the slight swell that met them as she cleared the shelter of the harbour. The afternoon was fading into a prematurely early twilight, the day had been heavy and clouded, a purple haze hung about the water, veiling the horizon irregularly.

"Hadn't we better keep to starboard?" asked Moira suggestively. She had been watching the motions of the ex-steward's oars, the right one was being pulled with much more vigour than the other; the gig was swerving even against the impulse of the rudder.

"The tide's running out," said Dennis Hartigan, "I want to come in on her lee."

"Y-yes," replied Moira nervously, "but there's a nasty current down the middle of the bay—the reefs do it—and we always keep wide of it."

"Nonsense!" rejoined the ex-steward; "I'm not afraid of a bit of current." And he rowed steadily on.

The light was failing and there was a sticky ripple on the water that portended storm, as did the occasional heavier swell that stole now and again under the keel of the gig, one minute lifting her nose at a startling angle, the next flinging up her heel on the crest of a glassy roller.

The ex-steward was a clever and a powerful oarsman, and he took the gig out on the course he had chosen for himself—a huge, semi-circular sweep.

Moira knitted her brows and tried to see by the position of familiar landmarks their exact proximity to the current of which she had spoken. But the purple ocean mist flung eddying swirls of vapour over them and she could not be sure.

As for Dennis Hartigan, he was still rowing with much apparent energy, but a shrewd observer might have seen that he was putting considerably less leg-work into his strokes. The gig was making a larger offing than was necessary to fetch the seaward side of the barque.

Suddenly Moira caught a glimpse of the shore and uttered an exclamation.

"We're in the current," she said; "the port oar, Mr. Hartigan, pull the port oar. Not too hard; we must get out of the current slowly or it will upset us."

For answer the ex-steward leant on his oars and looked at her. There was a fierce glimmer in his pupils and his ashen-fair moustache had bristled.

"That won't matter," he said, "I can swim back, if I'm not picked up."

Moira paled.

"What do you mean?" she faltered; "we are not in any very great danger. We shall get out of it; I have been caught before. Let me take the oars, Mr. Hartigan, I am more used to the bay than you are."

"Sit still!" Dennis Hartigan bade her harshly, and he dropped his oar-blades into the water again. Bracing his feet on the next thwart, he gave, not the stroke she had directed, but a true swivelling stroke, one oar hard-pulled and the other backed. The boat came round broadside on, a wave lapped into her and she rocked heavily.

Dennis Hartigan let an oar slip, as the veriest tyro might have done, and grabbed at it, with assumed eagerness, throwing his body out over the gunwale. The gig tilted, filled, and sank.

Moira, abruptly immersed in the cold waves, turned instinctively upon her back, and loosed the fastening that held her cloak about her neck. The garment fell from her and she changed her position to tread water, rising with the rollers to scan the surface for the ex-steward.

Perfectly at home in the water herself, her first thought was for her companion's safety. His obstinate clumsiness had produced the accident, yet considerations of humanity outweighed all else. Besides, was it not to do her a service that he had come out in the gig?

(*Continued overleaf.*)

SEIGEL'S SYRUP

Lack of food causes half our ailments and dangerous diseases. Not that we do not *eat* when we are hungry, or do not get *enough* to eat, but we do not *digest* what we do eat, that is the trouble. We call this indigestion, it is, in fact, "starvation," for starving means lack of food, and food is not food until it is digested. Undigested food passes through the body without doing any good, or worse, it remains and sets up fermentation in the stomach, poisoning the blood and nerves, dulling the brain, and clogging all the vital organs of the body with the vile products of indigestion.

FOR DYSPEPTICS

Thorough digestion is essential to sound health. Mother Seigel's Syrup ensures digestion. It contains digestive ferments and root and herb extracts that give tone and vitality to the stomach, liver and kidneys, enabling them to perform their functions perfectly, that is the secret of its great success. It builds health on good digestion, gives you the power to gain strength from food—the only way it can be gained.

AFTER DINNER.

"About three years ago," writes Mrs. S. A. Richards, Brynhaf Villa, Mountain Ash, Glam., "I began to suffer from sick headaches and depression. I lost my appetite completely; was frequently attacked by giddiness followed by vomiting; could get no sleep, and became too weak to walk. *My stomach was unable to retain nourishment.*

SEIGEL'S SYRUP

Doctors all failed in their treatment of me and I sank into a state of helplessness. But about eighteen months ago a friend advised me to try Mother Seigel's Syrup, and to my intense surprise, it acted on my system like a charm. Before I had finished the second bottle my recovery was complete." Mother Seigel's Syrup cures where everything else fails, because it acts on nature's rule that food is the origin of health and strength.

AIDS DIGESTION

SERIAL STORY.

Without warning she felt a clasp of iron about her waist. It girdled her from behind—over her arms. She guessed that the author of the grasp was the ex-steward, and deemed that, being overtaken by a spasm of terror, he had clutched at her, as a drowning man would do.

Had he clasped her from the front she could have dealt with him and with what she took to be that desperate frenzy which so often drowns the victim and the would-be rescuer. But the vice-like clutch behind was dragging her down, down, down. She threw herself on her back and swam backwards with desperate strokes, forcing him under the water.

Dennis Hartigan's grasp shifted and one hand moved to her throat. She twisted her head quickly and the hand dropped on her lips. She parted her white teeth and fixed them in the other's flesh—one must not hesitate over expedients when not a single life but a couple are at stake.

With a bubbling oath Dennis Hartigan loosed his clasp and she forced herself round. An instant more and they were face to face in the water. Her red-gold hair had broken from its pins and streamed wetly over her shoulders and in her blue eyes, making her look like some startled mermaiden.

The ex-steward spat the salt water out of his mouth and shook the brine from his coarse locks. Moira thrilled with horror. The visage of the ex-steward was alight, not with madness, but with hate and fury.

"You jade!" he snarled; "I'll do for you this time!"

He flung himself towards her, but she struck out powerfully in the long, racing side-stroke and put half-a-dozen lengths between them. He followed her with so swift an alternate right and left stroke that he seemed to be leaping after her.

She did not wait for the attack that she perceived was imminent, but dived, mermaid-like, on the instant. He could scarcely have told where she had been.

Treading water, he tried to peer over the tops of the waves. But in vain did he strive to pierce the mists of the brooding afternoon; Moira had disappeared from his sight. He could not see that, far off, a wet, golden head had emerged, to be borne steadily seaward in the relentless grip of the current.

TWENTY-SEVENTH CHAPTER.

"The Clue Must Be Followed Up."

"Mr. Ussher anywhere about?"

Paul Jerome put the question at a dingy counter in a large, bare room whose rough paint and distempered plaster were those of the severely sanitary public office. A young constable, unhelmeted and in a short jacket, came towards him with a stern air.

"Whom did you wish to see, sir," he asked, "and on what business?"

The war-correspondent regarded his inquisitor with tolerant amusement—he was used to the ways of police functionaries, high and low. He put a card on the counter; there was a half-crown on the strip of pasteboard.

"Oh, that's all right," he said cheerfully; "Ussher and I are old friends. If he's in the building have him hunted up for me, there's a good fellow."

The constable picked up the card, the half-crown disappearing mysteriously as part of the same process.

"Certainly, sir," he said, unbending, and went out into the adjacent corridor to dispatch a subordinate upon the desired mission. "I'll let you know in a moment, sir," he added, returning.

Paul Jerome nodded his thanks and strolled up and down in the confined space between the counter and the partition that divided it from the neighbouring corridor.. The stormy light of the cloudy afternoon gleamed lividly in at the big windows of the place, accentuating its stiff, harsh formality. The young constable had gone back to his work, and his pen squeaked loudly in the silent office.

The war-correspondent had not long to wait—the person for whom he had inquired emerged from a suddenly opened door in the passage hard by. He stepped across to Paul Jerome, raising his hand and inclining his head in a compromise between a bow and a salute.

"Good afternoon, sir," he said, and paused, expectant yet non-committal.

The war-correspondent drew a folded sheet of paper from his pocket and trifled with it.

"My dear Ussher," he observed, "I am, as I think you know, a well-wisher of yours. As a professional crime-investigator, I was, necessarily, at times, a critic of you and your work. That painful necessity exists no more and I can afford to be disinterested."

The detective coughed gruffly.

"I'm afraid, sir," he rejoined, "I must ask you to be more precise." But his eyes wandered to the document in his visitor's fingers.

"I propose, Ussher," he was told imperturbably, "to make you a present of some valuable information. In acknowledgment of which you will gratify my curiosity upon a point concerning which you will be no less curious than myself."

"Indeed," began the detective, but he glanced at the war-correspondent, and the supercilious, patronising note died out of his tone.

"I am very much obliged to you, Mr. Jerome," he said, with an effort, "a hint from you, sir, is not to be despised. As for anything I can tell you—legitimately, sir—you are very welcome."

Paul Jerome gave him the paper. It was that upon which the war-correspondent had taken the impress of the finger-prints from the cupboard door on the top storey of the Tower—the paper to which he had attached, for purposes of comparison, a certain newspaper illustration.

Mr. Ussher studied them.

"This—this ought to be very important, sir," he commenced. "I'm not an expert on such things myself, but the prints are near, very near alike, if not the same. May I ask who——"

He interrupted his sentence to step out into the corridor; the expression in his bilious eyes took the war-correspondent with him. Mr. Ussher piloted his companion into a small ante-room and shut the door. Then he contemplated once more the parallel prints.

"You got these yourself, sir," he said questioningly, as if by way of repeating, less bluntly, his incompleted query.

Paul Jerome shook his head.

"Not directly from a human hand," he responded, "they are from the inside of a painted door-frame on the same floor of the Tower as that on which Hannah Davenal was found dead. The door is that of a disused and dusty cupboard, there are partially-dusted-over finger-marks on the shelves and the door has apparently been drawn to by soiled fingers."

Mr. Ussher frowned.

"And how does that help us?" he demanded.

The war-correspondent lifted his brows.

"Does it not suggest," he replied, "that the murderer had hidden in the cupboard, soiled his hands on the dusty shelves, marked the door-frame in pulling it to for greater concealment, and ultimately gone out, to do his deadly work and leave the finger-prints found on the pillow?"

"Y-yes," allowed the detective, "but that affords no clue to the identity of the murderer."

"No positive one, perhaps," admitted Paul Jerome, "but it has been a theory of yours that the uncleanness of the murderer's hands showed him to be a person of the lower classes. Now if his hands were soiled by accident, that theory is disposed of. Besides, what does his having hidden in an out-of-the-way and disused cupboard suggest?"

Mr. Ussher's forehead wrinkled, but there was no comprehension in his face.

Jerome took pity on him.

"Why," he said, "that the murderer knew his way about the house."

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The detective started. "It does," he owned. "And do you know, Mr. Jerome, it squares with my investigations into that gamekeeper's story. It is evident that he did see Davenal walking in the park, near that burial-place there is there, with an elderly female. I made some experiments at the spot last night and am satisfied that he could, in the moonlight, distinguish features at the distance he indicates."

"The point of which is——" interpolated the war-correspondent.

"Why," pursued Mr. Ussher, "thanks to his mistaking the female in question for Lady Tarleton, I have an excellent guide to the person's appearance. The clue must be followed up. The woman may have been a former fellow-servant of Davenal's, and the meeting may have been due to some obscure intrigue, possibly with a criminal element. A quarrel may have sprung up and the other plotted revenge. There must be many ways of gaining surreptitious access to the Tower at night."

"Many," said Jerome, "and now, Ussher, to gratify my curiosity and test the value of my 'hint,' have you here the fingermarked pillow?"

The detective replied in the affirmative.

"The chief has it," he explained, "that and the rest of the 'pieces of conviction' as the French say. But I can get it, I've no doubt. Just a moment, sir."

He hastened out of the room, to reappear shortly with a large, flat parcel. Unfolding the wrappings, he revealed a couple of sheets of glass, laid together. Between them there reposed an oblong of linen—the soiled pillow-case. Each side could be studied through the protecting glass, yet the fingermarks were secure from modification or injury.

"Here we are," he said, "you see how the chief has had it done up. What did you think of testing?"

Paul Jerome put a thumb and finger in a vest-pocket and extracted a small metal cylinder. It contained a small lens of rare quality. He carried the glass plates to the window and examined the sandwiched linen minutely, trying the lens upon it at various distances. At last he looked up.

"Yes," he decided, "it is dust. Not earth, or grease, or soot, but dry, flocculent dust. Ussher, you had better come up to the Tower and inspect the cupboard officially."

"I will, sir," said the detective, "immediately—or I can meet you there at any time you will find convenient. You can then point out the particular cupboard and no one need suspect my interest in it."

The war-correspondent consulted his watch. "We will go upstairs together," he answered; "I have nothing better to do at the moment."

"I am much obliged to you, sir," declared Mr. Ussher, rewrapping the glass panes. He bore them off and returned. His hat was on and he was buttoning his cutaway coat of stiff pepper-and-salt tweed.

"Seems like rain, sir," he observed, as they passed out into the street and went round to gain the sea-front, *en route* for Groudle Tower. Paul Jerome inspected the overcast sky and the drifting purple mists that veiled the retreating tide. He marked intelligently the glassy roll of the breakers on the beach.

"Yes," he said, "the weather has been too fine for the time of year; our English climate cannot stand three fine days in Spring without getting up a thunderstorm on the strength of it."

"True, sir," agreed the other, "and I don't think the bursting of the storm is far off either."

They walked on in silence for a while and then the war-correspondent broke the silence.

"Ussher," he exclaimed, "tell me frankly, have you quite given up your suspicions of the man Hartigan?—in connection with the murder of his wife, that is."

Mr. Ussher weighed the question. "Yes, sir," he said, "your finger-print test, to my mind, was conclusive. Also, as we are aware, her ladyship's promise of a monetary gift to Davenal on the latter's leaving her service was known to Hartigan—why should he, as he asks, do anything to deprive

(*Continued overleaf.*)

Liver Complaint Vanquished.

Another Bile Bean Success.
Dizziness, Debility, and Headache Ended.

It is surprising how many apparently wide-apart functions are affected by disorder of the liver. There seems no connection between a person's temper and the colour of that person's eyes and skin! Yet the state of the liver affects both!

In the case of Mrs. Kelly, of Garbally, Birr (Ireland), the results of liver complaint were very serious. Here is her own story:—

"Up to July, 1901, I hardly ever had a day's sickness, but in that month I became unwell owing to getting wet. The ailment settled on my liver, so the doctor said, and for three weeks I was in bed. I trembled violently all over from liver chill, and had acute headaches. I was subject to violent retching, and vomited up everything I took. I was much affected with giddiness and often fainted away. The doctor was in attendance upon me for nearly three months, but long after he ceased to attend me I was subject to fainting fits. The fact was, I never got properly well.

The slightest shock would send me into a fainting fit, and I have fainted nearly a dozen times a day. At night I could get no sleep. I got so ill that I could do no work, and the children—I am the mother of eleven—had to do it all.

"One night my daughter Mary read about Bile Beans in the *Weekly Freeman*. The account told of a woman who had been cured of ailments similar to mine, so I decided to take a course of Bile Beans. I very soon found that they were doing me good, and without going through much uninteresting detail, I can say that they have now made me strong and healthy again. I strongly recommend them to all who suffer as I did."

You may not have become so much reduced by liver complaint as was Mrs. Kelly, but remember, *if you suffer at all from it*, you're not safe. For every form and result of liver disorder (including such results as indigestion, constipation, female disorders, constant headache, piles and liver chill), Bile Beans are a safe and certain remedy. They cure the effects of liver disorder by removing the cause. You'll get them from any medicine vendor. Don't accept substitutes.

Miss MARIE TEMPEST says:—

"I have used your EUGOL TOOTH POWDER for some time, and consider it the most delightful preparation ever brought before the public." A bottle of Eugol Liquid Dentifrice, also box of powder or paste, post free for 2s. 6d., with plan for return of your 2s. 6d. for four minutes' easy work.

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Daily Express

It is undoubtedly London's Best, Brightest and Newsiest Halfpenny Morning Paper.

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SERIAL STORY.

himself of a share in his wife's forthcoming good luck? 'Seek whom the crime profits'—eh, sir?"

"Quite so," responded Paul Jerome. "I cannot deny your logic, Ussher; to a certain extent, it is my own. But for all that, Hartigan is a villain. I know that."

"You *know* it, sir?" queried the detective significantly.

"You mean can I produce proof?" said Jerome thoughtfully; "yes, and no. More no, I fancy, than yes—let it be no altogether."

He strolled on by his companion's side, his hands linked idly behind his back.

"I feel, Ussher," he added, "as if I had most of the letters that go to make up the word necessary to solve the problem in which you are professionally, I philosophically, interested. Change them about as I may they will not spell a word—and yet they are suggestive of one."

"And the word suggested," queried Mr. Ussher, "is?"

Paul Jerome looked up. The sky about them had suddenly grown dark, a muffled peal of thunder had punctuated the detective's sentence and a few huge raindrops spattered the dust of the lane. The detective and the war-correspondent were ascending the narrow hedged thoroughfare that led over the level crossing to the inland highway.

"By Jove!" said Paul Jerome, "here is the storm. We shall have to find shelter. I know these Cumberland deluges. There is an inn on the high road, just past the end of the lane."

They hurried on in the increasing downpour. The gates of the level crossing were closed, and by them waited a tall brown hack, with a habited figure in the saddle. A groom, in a familiar livery of blue and orange, was in attendance. The war-correspondent recognised the feminine rider as Irene Tarleton.

While they neared her, the train for whose transit the gates had been closed, dashed by, the gates reopened, and she urged her horse forward. A flash of lightning split the gloom around. The hack swerved from it, and Paul Jerome came into Irene's field of vision. The rain was descending with growing violence, but she checked her horse and greeted him gaily.

"Am I not nicely caught?" she said, laughing down at him between the raindrops; "and you are in no better case. We shall all be beautifully soaked."

Paul Jerome hesitated. "If I might make a recommendation," he answered, "there is an inn within a stone's throw where Ussher and I were about to take refuge. No doubt they have some sort of parlour or other private apartment where you might wait till the storm has passed off, or at least moderated."

"That will do famously," said Irene; "mamma will be shocked, but that is nothing new. And I shall be able to go home dry."

"You won't if you stop here another minute," objected the war-correspondent; "the flood-gates of Heaven are about to be opened. Please gallop on and I will follow—the place is on the roadside round the right of the lane end, the Half Brick Inn."

"I know it," rejoined Irene, and shook her hack into a smart canter.

Paul Jerome motioned to the detective, who had retreated into the shelter of a hedge.

"Come on, Ussher," he adjured him; "we shall be drowned if we don't get under cover. Can you sprint?"

Mr. Ussher smiled grimly, and broke into a trot. Jerome kept at his side, and the two men, so different in bulk and stature, dashed off through the rain. But when they reached the Half Brick and leapt into the hall of the inn, past the ostler who was leading away the brown hack and its companion, the detective's face was poppy-coloured and his eyes starting. The war-correspondent chuckled

"You haven't kept as fit as I have, Ussher," he said; "well, have something to help your wind back while I see that Miss Tarleton is comfortable."

"Humph," observed Mr. Ussher, "I thought that was Miss Tarleton—I've seen her out with you before. All right, you will find me in the bar parlour; it's a favourite haunt of mine—the entire gossip of Groudle comes to the bar parlour of the Half Brick."

Paul Jerome nodded absently. Irene Tarleton was beckoning to him from the door that flanked the bar.

He entered it and found himself in a little old-fashioned sitting-room, with a faded yet gaudy Brussels on the floor, and furnished by a very shiny suite of "burr" walnut, indistinguishable oil paintings in tarnished gilt frames, and a yellow-keyed piano. The landlady, a portly, flustered dame, was doing the honours of this stately apartment.

"Oh, please, Mr. Jerome," said Irene, "do convince these good people that I don't want any refreshment, and that I am not a scrap frightened of thunder."

"As to that," declared the war-correspondent, "I am sure Miss Tarleton is far too sensible to be alarmed at the storm. But with respect to the refreshment, I believe we may have to wait some while, or even send over to the Tower for a carriage, and I should humbly suggest to Miss Tarleton that a cup of tea would serve to while away the time."

Irene considered. "If you will share it with me," she said. "Yes."

Jerome threw his hat upon a chair.

"I shall be delighted," he answered, and turned to their buxom attendant. "A real country tea," he ordered, "with bread and butter and honey—or jam, strawberry jam for choice."

"Yes, sir," said the mistress of the Half Brick; "but won't the young lady take her hat off? It is very wet."

"Perhaps I will," assented Irene, and she felt for the pins, and took off her stiff headgear. In her severely plain, yet sweeping garments, she was a graceful, distinguished figure; her mother was not without judgment in insisting that she should wear only long gowns.

Jerome placed a chair for her, and she sat down as the landlady departed.

"I—I trust," he said quizzically, "that you are not thinking of your aunt in Yorkshire."

Irene laughed outright—and sighed.

"I'm afraid," she responded, "that these unconventional proceedings would bring me distinctly nearer that species of banishment—at all events, if mamma were to hear of them—were it not that she has already decided to whisk me off to London. We go back any day now."

The war-correspondent stood looking at her.

"Do you know," he said, "I am more than ever obliged to the storm?"

"Indeed," returned Irene; "why?"

Jerome leant on the back of her chair. "I am going to take a mental photograph," he answered; "a photograph that I shall treasure all my life, and that nothing will be able to rob me of—the picture of you, presiding in a modest little room, over a tea-tray."

Irene was pulling off her riding gloves. "And underneath," she added, flippantly, "the motto: 'One lump, or two?'"

The war-correspondent stepped quickly away—the knob of the door had been twisted, and a smart serving maid appeared with a damask-covered tray. She had bold black eyes and red lips and her skirts were coquettishly short.

With many side glances at the unusual patrons of the Half Brick, she set out the impromptu meal and withdrew.

Irene lifted her chair to the table and began to wield the heavy Queen Anne teapot of silver which had been pressed into service to do them honour.

The war-correspondent took the cup of tea she offered him and himself sat down. A momentary silence fell upon them as they addressed themselves to the simple food before them.

Jerome was watching Irene, and she was aware of it; the rain lashed the little casemented bay of the room, the place

(*Continued on page* 636.)

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The Dangers of Catarrh.

The great danger in catarrh rests in the fact that most people look upon the trouble as a chronic cold. In a way, this is correct; for the onset of nasal catarrh can generally be traced to a beginning in an obstinate cold, or succession of colds, in the head. The error comes in the tendency to neglect the disease, on the supposition that it is only a cold, and will disappear in time. The neglected cold becomes a chronic catarrh, which, according to the predisposition of the sufferer, may destroy the sense of taste, smell, and hearing, and may attack the throat, lungs, or stomach. The most interesting question to the catarrh patient, however, is how to get rid of the disease. Operations and cauterizations of the nose are generally advised; but the Editor of the "Review of Ear, Nose, and Throat Diseases," shows that there is another method of cure (painless and capable of home application) and publishes, with the April "Review," a "Supplement," containing full details of a large number of cases cured by this new method. A free copy of the "Review," with "Supplement," can be obtained by addressing the Editor, Drouet Institute, 10 Marble Arch, London, W. Another special feature of the "Review" is the enclosure of a Patient's Report Form, for the benefit of those who wish advice, for which no fee is charged, if given by correspondence. The Editor advises patients, however, when possible, to visit the Drouet Institute for a personal consultation with the medical staff. Consulting hours are—in the morning, 10 to 12; and in the afternoon, 2 to 4; week days only. A fee of five shillings is charged for personal consultation.

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smelt of lavender and furniture polish. Irene noticed the latter, Jerome the former. He was in a more romantic mood than the mischievous good temper of his companion allowed her to be.

"I feel," said the war-correspondent at last, "that if I were to look out of that window I should see a post-chaise with fresh horses, and postillions drinking confusion to the pursuers—our pursuers!—while we snatch a little refreshment to fortify us against the final stage to—Gretna Green."

Irene coloured.

"You have a powerful imagination, Mr. Jerome," she observed; "I can see nothing outside but rain." And she gazed out at the April deluge that was pouring in a continuous torrent from the sullen heavens.

"Have some bread and honey," said Paul Jerome; "the queen of the nursery rhyme, you know, was in the parlour, eating bread and honey, though we are not told that it was an April storm that kept her from going out. Or do you prefer jam—strawberry jam?"

Irene Tarleton laughed at his boyish gaiety, and took some of the latter. It was typical country preserve, with whole fruit swimming in a sea of crimson syrup. Jerome drank his tea gravely.

Suddenly he put the cup down and quoted—with great deliberation—some famous lines.

> "*A loaf of bread, a cup of wine, and Thou*
> *Beside me singing in the Wilderness—*
> *Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow.*"

"Not in the least appropriate," exclaimed Irene saucily, but her voice trembled; "tea is not wine, and I am not singing, and Cumberland is not a wilderness."

The war correspondent's fingers sought and closed over her hand.

"No," he said, "but it will be when you are gone. London was and Nice was, and as for Turkey, it was a howling desert."

He leant across the tea-tray and looked into her face.

"Irene," he faltered, "I'm a fool to hope to win you—a mad fool. I think it's the thunder in the air. I love, you, dear, and I'm a selfish brute—seeing that I can only offer you a middle-class home and income. But I can't bear to lose you, even to a better man. I don't seem able to think of anything but how much I want you."

Irene's hand turned in his, and clasped it, and her eyes lifted themselves to his own.

"I'm glad you're *not* able to," she murmured. And her tones were thrilled by the daring tenderness with which a woman unveils her heart.

Paul Jerome stooped over her hand and kissed it. But Irene drew it away and leant towards him, a scarlet spot burning on each of her cheeks.

The war-correspondent laid his own hands unsteadily on her soft shoulders and put his lips to hers. And then, for a long time, neither of them heeded the lessening splash of the rain on the window or the failing lightning that showed more and more wanly in the clearing sky.

A tap on the door roused them, and the serving-maid entered.

"Please, sir," she said, "but will you want anything more. And Mr. Ussher says can he have a word with you."

The war-correspondent sipped carelessly at a cup of cold tea, and, with an air of great indifference, rose. Irene rose too, and picked up her hat. Jerome stepped out into the bar. Mr. Ussher was contemplating, from the door of the Half Brick, the diminishing rain.

The war-correspondent went across to him. But ere he could reach the detective a dripping fly, coming from the direction of Groudle Town, drove on to the cobblestone plateau before the inn, and halting at the door, disgorged into its sanded interior a group of fisher folk

There were some two or three of the rough, familiar figures that were used to lounge about the quays and beach of Groudle, and they sustained the uneven steps of no less a person than Mr. Dennis Hartigan.

The ex-steward—wrapped in an oilskin coat that covered imperfectly a suit of clothes obviously not his own—leant heavily on his supporters. It was evident from his demeanour, and that of his companions, that something unusual and momentous had happened.

"Hullo, what's up?" exclaimed the landlord of the Half Brick, craning his neck over his beer pump handles.

One of the fishermen answered. "Mr. Hartigan will be all right," the landlord was told, "especially after a night's rest—he swims like a fish. But it's a black day for John Davenal."

"John Davenal," repeated Mr. Ussher. He had stridden forward and was inspecting the little group with a curious eye.

"Aye," retorted the speaker. "Moira, his daughter, and Mr. Hartigan were out in a small boat, got into the Middle Current, and were capsized. We got Mr. Hartigan out—but the poor lass was swept away. Rare bad luck John Davenal's had of late, and no mistake. Well, we must put Mr. Hartigan to bed and give him something hot."

"One moment," said a voice, breaking sternly into the colloquy, and Paul Jerome came to the detective's side. He had heard all.

(*To be continued.*)

A NEW SERIAL, by Blanche Eardley, who is writing the series of articles, called "Tinsel Triumphs," now appearing in Pearson's Weekly, *will commence the week after next. Order your copy of SHORT STORIES for that date (May 30th) to be reserved for you.*

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The Miss with the Mission.

"What sort of a girl is she?" "Oh, she is a miss with a mission!" "Ah!" "Her mission is seeking a man with a mansion."

A Natural Supposition.

Mrs. Sweet: "Isn't it strange that Henry will never permit Edith to open his watch?" Mr. Sweet: "Humph! There must be another girl in the case."

He'd Left it at Home.

Miss Towney (in search of the idyllic, at last meets a real, live shepherd): "Pray tell me, gentle shepherd, where is thy pipe?" The Gentle Shepherd: "I left it at oom, mum, 'cause I ain't got no baccy."

Could Go On Wanting.

"No, Harry, I am sorry; but I am sure that we could not be happy together. You know I always want my own way in everything." "But, my dear girl, you could go on wanting it after we were married."

That Stupid Post Office.

"Dear me, what a silly blunder of the Post-office people to have made," said the young wife. "What's the matter?" "Why, I've just got a letter from Harry, who is working hard in London, and it's post-marked Brighton."

His Most Valuable Possession.

Amelia: "Swear not by the moon, the inconstant moon." Augustus: "Then what shall I swear by?" Amelia: "Swear by that which you hold invaluable; something that you cannot live without." Augustus: "Then, Amelia, I love you! I swear it by my bicycle!"

Wanted His Money's Worth.

Miss Jumpuppe (to Ellerton, who is taking her out for a ride, and whose horse has turned round and refused to move): "Don't be annoyed, Mr. Ellerton. Have patience, and he will move on presently." Mr. Ellerton: "Patience, Miss Jumpuppe! Why, I am paying for the animal by the hour!"

Quoted Ancient History.

"You were a long time in the far corner of the conservatory with Mr. Willing last evening," suggested the mother. "What was going on?" "Do you remember the occasion on which you became engaged to papa?" inquired the daughter, by way of reply. "Of course I do!" "Then it ought not to be necessary for you to ask any questions." Thus gently the news was broken that they were to have a son-in-law.

A Cordial Invitation.

"I trust, Mr. Borum," said Miss Cutting, as the young man was about to depart, "that you will spend one more evening with us before we move into our new house." "Delighted, I assure you, Miss Cutting," replied Borum. "By the way, when do you expect to move?" "I'm not positive as to the exact date," she answered, "but the workmen began excavating for the foundation yesterday, and papa expects the house to be finished in about eighteen months."

He Couldn't Help it.

"Blusher is the most bashful man I ever knew." "How on earth, then, did he come to get married?" "He was too bashful to refuse."

Some Use for Her.

Crabshaw: "A jealous wife is of no use in this world." Mrs. Crabshaw: "I don't agree with you, my dear. She enables the plain typine to get a job."

Why She Coaxed Him.

Cholly: "Why did you coax me on to tell you that I loved you?" Dolly: "Because Madge told me you looked so funny when you proposed. And she's right."

He Was Affected That Way.

Chollie: "Are you fond of the water?" Elsie: "Very! At the mere thought of sailing over the bounding waves I can scarcely contain myself." Chollie: "Yes, that's the way it affects me too."

English Better than American.

He: "I am rather in favour of the English than the American mode of spelling." She: "Yes?" He: "Yes, indeed! Take 'parlour,' for instance. Having 'u' in it makes all the difference in the world."

Unsentimental.

Mr. Poeticus (entering cheerfully): "My love is like the red, red rose!" Mrs. Poeticus (looking up from the stove): "You'd look red, too, you lazy scribbler, if you'd been bending over a frying-pan for twenty minutes."

She'd Had Enough Sitting.

"Won't you take this seat?" said the gentleman in the tramcar, rising and lifting his hat. "No, thank you," said the girl with the skates over her arm. "I've been skating at the ice palace, and I'm tired of sitting down."

Billing and Cooing.

"I suppose you get a lot of honeymoon couples billing and cooing about here?" asked the inquisitive stranger of the landlord of a favourite week-end resort. "Well, ye—es," replied the man of experience, "plenty of cooing. I manage the rest."

Size Made a Difference.

Miss Clara: "You say, Ethel, that you only paid sixpence for having your gloves cleaned? Why, only the other day I was actually asked ninepence!" Miss Ethel (with a slight, but not dangerous cough): "Indeed, dear, but I suppose the size is considered?"

She Liked Being Hugged.

Gertie: "I have not seen Mr. Nicefello with you lately." Maud: "He is practising on the river." "I did not know he cared for rowing." "He doesn't, but he joined a club to please me." "To please you?" "Yes. I thought rowing would strengthen his arms."

Must Get a Better Excuse.

"Nobody can learn all there is worth knowing in this lifetime," said Mr. Meekton wisely. "And a man ought never to assume that his education is finished. I'm going to keep ahead with mine; I'm going to study astronomy." His wife looked at him sharply, and then, in a cold, hard tone exclaimed: "Leonidas, you'll have to think up some better excuse than that for staying out all night."

His Love for Her.

George had been holding his girl on his lap for over two hours, and as she weighed 190 odd pounds he was feeling a little bit tired, but he was too much of a gentleman to tell her so. "George, dear," she murmured softly, "are you having a pleasant call?" "Delightful, darling," he responded faintly. "And are you not sorry that we are to be married so soon?" "No, indeed." "And you think I am a nice girl?" she continued lovingly. "Nice girl?" repeated George enthusiastically. "Nice doesn't express it. I think you are immense."

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Conducted by CYNTHIA.

[In this page are answered any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to Miss Cynthia Hamilton, c/o the Editor of SHORT STORIES.*]*

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

What Should He Do?

"E. R." writes—"If you were in love with a girl and she told you not to write to her or see her till a certain day, what would be the best thing to do, do you think? We live at a distance of thirteen miles apart, but she comes in this district every day."

* * * * *

It all depends on the length of time during which she has forbidden you to see her. If it's only a little while, and you are sure she is fond of you, I should respect her wishes, and leave her alone for that time. Perhaps she has some family difficulty or embarrassment to which she wishes to attend quietly, in which case I am sure you would not wish to intrude on her. The whole question is: Does she reciprocate your love? If so, the first thing you should do to prove your own devotion should be to trust her. Write to her and tell her you do trust her, and feel sure she is true to you.

❦❦❦

The Deserted Lover.

"H. A. E." is twenty-three and has been keeping company with a man two years older since she was sixteen. They have quarrelled many times, but generally made it up at short intervals. Recently they had a sort of grand opera squabble which threatened to keep them apart for the rest of time, but the man, as usual, came up repenting, and things went on as before.

* * * * *

However, when he did turn up it was to tell "H. A. E." that he had got a passing passion for another girl—a barmaid—and he wished to postpone further intimacy with "H. A. E." until he had lived it down. "H. A. E." asks my opinion on his conduct, as she fears he is going to the bad. He spends all his time at the bar behind which works the maid of his new fancy.

* * * * *

This, "H. A. E.," is often the outcome of boy and girl friendships. I do not doubt that you are thoroughly well suited to each other, since you have been more or less inseparables for seven years. But I should think you have been more chums than lovers. He has suddenly awakened to the thought that a man can have feelings stronger than friendship, or even devotion, and the barmaid is at present reaping the fruits of his awakening.

* * * * *

I advise you to leave him severely alone. Tell him that, until he has made up his mind as to yourself, that you wish to sever all communications. Probably after a little while his infatuation will have run its course, and that over he will return to his old love, all the better for the temporary breach.

A Forward Miss.

"BASHFUL MAN."—Young ladies who ask strange young men for primroses in railway carriages are not usually to be recommended. Give the primroses, by all means, if the young lady wants them, but do so in such a way that she will see that you have nothing else to offer her.

❦❦❦

Engaged at Eighteen.

"UNCERTAIN" wants to know whether eighteen is too young for a girl to become engaged. A friend of hers who is this age is just engaged to a man of twenty.

* * * * *

It all depends on the persons concerned, "UNCERTAIN." Some persons are much older at eighteen than others of even a much more mature age, and in their case, of course, it is not too young. Ordinarily, twenty or twenty-one is quite early enough. Before that neither a girl nor a man really knows their own mind, so far as the state of matrimony is concerned.

❦❦❦

A Widower in the Way.

"JACK."—Yes, I am always glad to hear from the "boys." You are in love with a girl who professes to return your love. But she carries on relations with a widower much older than herself, and cannot keep appointments with you because of engagements with him. All the time she professes to be fonder of you than of anyone else.

* * * * *

It is certain that you cannot play second fiddle to the widower. Besides, he would most probably drown your music. These widowers have wonderful ways with women. Be frank with her, and make her take her choice. If she loves you, she must give up the widower.

❦❦❦

False Accusations.

"G. T. L." has been keeping company with a young lady for several years. She now accuses him of certain things which she has heard, but they are not true. She also tells him he is not straightforward, but fails to explain in what way. She wants to continue friendship with him. What is he to do?

* * * * *

There is only one solution to this problem, "G. T. L.," and that is to tell the young lady that, unless she will explain herself, and so enable you to contradict the false charges made against you, you do not see what advantage is gained by continuing to be friends. If she really cares for you she will do this; if not, I think you will be happier apart.

❦❦❦

A Complex Affair.

"ANXIOUS" is one of those young men who, in the words of the song, "must love someone." At first he took a great fancy to a friend of a lady friend of his, and they walked out together. Then this girl found she could not keep any more appointments with "ANXIOUS." He promptly asked his lady friend to find him someone else, which she did. "ANXIOUS" walked with this young lady, but disliked her.

* * * * *

Then the first young lady and the second one quarrelled over "ANXIOUS." He, however, remains devoted to the first one. How should he approach her to resume the intimacy? He says she lives a long way from him, and he does not wish to write to her at present.

* * * * *

How you are to get intimate with a girl if you cannot go and see her, and don't wish to write to her, is more than I can say, unless you get Marconi to fit you both up with wireless telegraphy. You had better devote your Sundays—which I suppose are free—to meeting the girl. I cannot see any other way out of it.

Cynthia.

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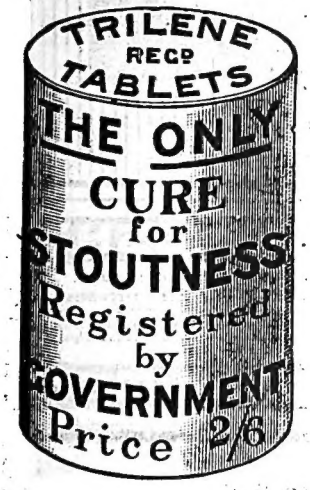

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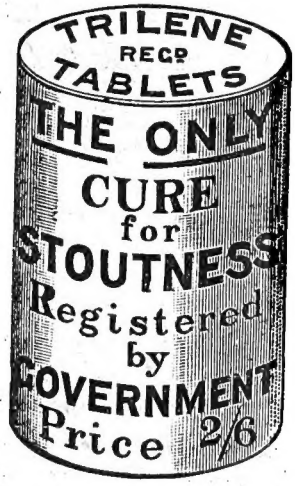

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1898.

Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

COUNTESS SECKENDORFF, of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

MISS CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says: "I weighed 12st. 8lb., but am now 11st., and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Bucklegh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

Mrs. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

Miss NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Riseholm Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."

"West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets, which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity."

Mrs. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Clifford Street, South Wigston, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 9st. 11lb."

Mr. MCLEOD, 44 Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

COUNT EHRENWAUD, of Listorp, Sweden, writes, 9th Oct., 1899: "The person who took Tablets lost 18lb. during the cure.

Mr. GIBBS, 147 Richmond Park, Kimberworth, Rotherham, says: "Since I began with them they have reduced me 2st. 3lb., and I am pleased to say I am a great deal better in health and in every way."

Mrs. FENTON, 11 Wood Street, Tyldesley, writes: "Been fat all my life, but now your Tablets tell a tale. I have lost 17lb. already and am delighted."

Mrs. MARY WILLIAMS, of Old Yard, near Redol, Bagilt, Wales, writes Nov. 22nd, 1898: "Your Tablets reduced me 2st., and have benefited me greatly."

A. M. PRATT, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weight was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

Mrs. H. COX, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablet has reduced my weight 1½ stones."

Mrs. PEARCE, Armstrong Road, Benwell: "Reduced from 12st. to 9½st., and do not get any heavier."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs., says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mrs. ROLLITT, of North Farm, Letwell, says: "Tablets have done a world of good—reduced 14lb. already without altering diet."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round waist, now I am 32 inches. I hope soon to be 23. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess FURSTENBERG, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes: "I am reduced from 13st. 5lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

Mrs. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver, nr. Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of fat. I am delighted, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

Lady C. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets.

Miss JANE CARTER of Forthampton House, Tewkesbury, says: "The Tablets are of the greatest valu I am reduced many stone, and shall be pleased to recommend them."

Mr. THOS BLAKELY, of 37 The Grove, Bedford, writes: "I have lost a little over 42lb. since taking your Tablets, and my case causes much local interest."

Miss F. L. BALL, 47 Chesterfield Road, St. Andrews, Bristol, writes: "I am quite cured through your Tablets. They improve the figure, and greatly relieve shortness of breath."

Miss PATIENT, of Woodberry, Theydon Bois: "Feel great benefit from Tablets. I have lost 2st., and am sufficiently reduced."

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